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FSSAI YIELDS

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LITERACY PROGRAMME

22.7 lakh adults gain literacy this year

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PARLEY

Is the Khalistan movement reviving?

Concern mounts post crackdown in Punjab

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READY TO ROLL

Super Kings challenge for Titans in opener

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EC flags issue of urban apathy

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

As the countdown to the Assembly elections begins, the Election Commission of India has flagged the issue of urban apathy, with Bengaluru always reporting the lowest voter turnout.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar said against the 72.44% voter turnout in Karnataka during the 2018 Assembly elections, the four divisions in Bengaluru had recorded around 55% polling. Over 88% of the 8,615 polling stations in these four divisions (across the 28 Assembly constituencies) are in urban areas.

The Bengaluru civic body has undertaken various initiatives to improve voter turnout under the Systematic Voters Education and Electoral Participation programme.

DETAILS ON
» PAGE 3

Drugs for rare diseases get customs duty relief

Centre issues waiver to offer substantial cost savings for those in need of such treatments; pembrolizumab (Keytruda) used in treatment of various cancers also gets the same concession

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

All drugs and food for special medical purposes imported for personal use for treatment of all rare diseases listed under the National Policy for Rare Diseases, 2021 are now fully exempted from basic customs duty, the Union government declared through a general exemption notification. The waiver will come into effect from Saturday.

The Centre has also fully exempted pembrolizumab (Keytruda), used in treatment of various cancers, from basic customs duty.

In order to get this exemption, the individual importer has to produce a certificate from the Central or State Director of Health Services or District Medical Officer/Civil Surgeon of the district.

Drugs/medicines generally attract basic customs duty of 10%, while some categories of life-saving drugs/vaccines attract concessional rate of 5% or nil. According to a government release, while exemptions are already in place for certain drugs for treatment of spinal muscular atrophy or Duchenne muscular dystrophy, it has been receiving many representations seeking customs duty relief for drugs and medicines used in treatment of other rare diseases.

Drugs or special foods required for the treatment of these diseases are expensive and often need to be imported. Food for special medical purposes is a food formulation intended to provide nutritional support to persons who suffer from a specific disease, disorder or condition.

It is estimated that for a child weighing 10 kg, the annual cost of treatment for some rare diseases may vary from ₹10 lakh to over ₹1 crore per year, with treatment being lifelong and drug dose and cost increasing with age and weight. This exemption will result in substantial cost savings and provide much-needed relief to the patients, said the release. *(With inputs from PTI)*

Easing health costs

The government has announced policy changes in import duties to ease the healthcare costs of rare diseases. A lowdown:

- Full exemption from basic customs duty on imported drugs and special medical foods for personal use in treating rare diseases
- Certificate from health authorities **required** for individuals to get the exemption
- Previously, drugs/medicines attracted customs duty of 10%, with some lifesaving drugs having concessional rates
- **Pembrolizumab**, used in cancer treatment, also fully exempted from basic customs duty

Annual treatment costs for rare diseases can range from ₹10 lakh to over ₹1 crore per year

Slow progress: Rescue workers haul a woman out of the stepwell where many are still feared to be trapped. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

14 dead after falling into stepwell as floor of temple collapses

Shubhomoy Sikdar
RAIPUR

At least 14 devotees were killed when the roof of a stepwell at a temple in Indore, Madhya Pradesh collapsed on Thursday morning. Though 19 persons were rescued after the accident, two of them died later. One more body was recovered later in the evening. Several people were critically injured.

The victims were part of a crowd that had gathered at the Shri Beleshwar Mahadev Jhulelal Temple in the Patel Nagar area for the Ram Navami celebrations. The stepwell's roof, made of concrete slabs supported by iron rods, served as the temple floor. It caved in under the combined weight of the devotees.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12

NEARBY

State notifies 10% EWS quota

BENGALURU
On the eve of the announcement of the Assembly polls, the State government notified the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) category to provide 10% reservation in education and employment. » Page 8

METROPLUS » PAGE 7

Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

The amount of onions to be bought by the govt. in Rabi season

3 In lakh tonnes. Food and Public Distribution Minister Piyush Goyal, who handles the Consumer Affairs, Food and Public distribution portfolio, said that last year, the overall buying of the rabi harvest stood at 2.5 lakh tonnes. PTI

Pharmacies to be set up in stations at the Eastern Railway zone

270 stations. These stations will also have collection centres of laboratories. About 14 railway stations will also have doctors, the Eastern Railway General Manager Arun Arora informed. PTI

The debts recorded by six telecom companies in 2021-22

4.17 In ₹ lakh crore. The government has approved various structural and procedural reforms in the telecom sector, the Minister of State for Telecom Devusinh Chauhan said. PTI

The students from SC, ST, and OBC category to have dropped out

19,256 students in the last five years. While 14,446 such students dropped out from central universities, 4,444 students dropped out from IITs. PTI

The Kisan Rail services operated since its launch in August 2020

2,364 rail services. The railways ran on 167 routes disbursing ₹4 crore in subsidy this year, Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said. PTI

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The piezoelectric effect in liquids

Why does Quartz exhibit the piezoelectric effect? Why has the effect not been observed in liquids till now? In what type of liquid has it now been discovered? What are the applications of this new discovery? Will it have any environmental benefits?

EXPLAINER

Vasudevan Mukunth

The story so far:
For the first time, scientists have reported evidence of the piezoelectric effect in liquids. The effect has been known for 143 years and in this time has been observed only in solids. The new finding challenges the theory that describes this effect as well as opens the door to previously unanticipated applications in electronic and mechanical systems. The effect was found in pure 1-butyl-3-methyl imidazolium bis(trifluoromethyl-sulfonyl)imide and 1-hexyl-3-methyl imidazolium bis(trifluoromethylsulfonyl)imide – both ionic liquids (liquids which are made of ions instead of molecules) at room temperature. The study paper was published in the *Journal of Physical Chemistry Letters*.

An illustration of an electric current. NIKHITA SINGHAL/UNSPLASH

What is the piezoelectric effect?
In the piezoelectric effect, a body develops an electric current when it is squeezed. Quartz is the most famous piezoelectric crystal; it is used in analog wristwatches and clocks. Such crystals are also used in other instruments where converting mechanical stress to a current is useful.

Quartz is silicon dioxide (SiO_2). The quartz crystal consists of silicon and oxygen atoms at the four vertices of a three-sided pyramid; each oxygen atom is shared by two pyramids. These pyramids repeat themselves to form the crystal. The effective charge of each pyramid is located slightly away from the centre. When a mechanical stress is applied, that is when the crystal is squeezed, the position of the charge is pushed further from the centre, giving rise to a small voltage. This is the source of the effect.

Why is the effect in liquids surprising?
The reason the piezoelectric effect has only been expected in solids thus far is that the body being squeezed needs to have an organised structure, like the pyramids of quartz. Liquids don't have such structure as they take the shape of the container.

Physicists explain the effect using a combination of Hooke's law – that the force required to squeeze an object is linearly (i.e. non-exponentially) proportional to the amount of squeezing – and the properties of dielectric materials. These are materials that don't conduct electricity but whose electrons are still mildly affected by an electric field. Hooke's law is not clear when the body isn't very compressible.

"While I am unwilling to claim this requires a complete rethink of the physics of piezoelectrics, the observation of the effect in ionic liquids appears on its face to be inconsistent with the current model," Gary Blanchard, a professor at the Department of Chemistry, Michigan State University, and a coauthor of the paper, told *The Hindu*. "An implication of our findings is the existence of some manner of organisation in ionic liquids that is not seen in 'normal' liquids." Indeed, their discovery will have to be modelled in ionic liquids specifically. This is because, according to the paper, 'normal' and ionic liquids of the kind tested in the study respond very differently, at the molecular level, when an electric charge is "imposed" on them.

"Within the framework of the current understanding, the piezoelectric effect requires 'persistent' order within the material," Dr. Blanchard explained. "Normal liquids and gases have not been shown to exhibit order that persists long enough to be observed and characterised."

What new applications are possible?
According to the paper, "The discovery ... opens the door to applications that have previously not been accessible with solid-state materials, and [room-temperature ionic liquids] are more readily recyclable and in many instances pose fewer environmental issues than many currently used piezoelectric materials."

The liquids also displayed the inverse piezoelectric effect: they became distorted when an electric charge was applied. Dr. Blanchard told the magazine IEEE *Spectrum* that this fact could be used to control how the liquids bent light passing through them by passing different currents through them. That is, using this simple control mechanism, vials of these liquids could be lenses with dynamic focusing abilities.

"I believe the most pressing matter is to develop a theoretical framework with predictive power to understand these experimental observations," Dr. Blanchard stated.

Having a theory to explain the liquids' behaviour could reveal why these liquids behave the way they do, which in turn could reveal better ways to develop newer applications.

THE GIST

- For the first time, scientists have reported evidence of the piezoelectric effect in liquids. The effect has been known for 143 years and in this time has been observed only in solids.
- In the piezoelectric effect, a body develops an electric current when it is squeezed. Quartz is the most famous piezoelectric crystal; it is used in analog wristwatches and clocks.
- The reason the piezoelectric effect has only been expected in solids thus far is that the body being squeezed needs to have an organised structure. Liquids don't have such structure as they take the shape of the container.

The issues with the Quality Control Orders for fibres

How would the new orders from the BIS deter international textile imports?

M. Soundariya Preetha

The story so far:
Quality Control Orders (QCO) have been issued for fibres – cotton, polyester and viscose – that constitute the basic raw materials for majority of the Indian textile and clothing industry. While the standards were available earlier too, these are now revised and made mandatory for a few, and yet to be finalised for others. International manufacturers of these fibres, who supply to India, are also mandated to get a certificate from the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), which is the certifying authority for the QCOs.

Why are fibres covered under QCOs?
The Indian textile and clothing industry consumes both indigenous and imported fibres and filaments. The imports are for different reasons – cost competitiveness, non-availability in the domestic market, or to meet a specified demand of the overseas buyer. The main aim of the QCO is to control import of sub-quality and cheaper items and to ensure that customers get quality products. The entire supply chain, from the textile manufacturers to exporters, has so far focused on quality standards prescribed by the buyers.

What challenges does the new mandate bring?
India imports annually 50,000 - 60,000 tonnes of viscose fibre and its variants such as Modal and Tencel LF from nearly 20 countries. In the case of polyester, almost 90,000 tonnes of polyester fibre and 1.25 lakh tonnes of POY (Polyester Partially Oriented Yarn) are imported annually.

The overseas fibre manufacturers sell not only to India but to other countries too. The supply of some fibres to India is in small quantities. Getting the certificate from the BIS involves a cost and and hence not all are interested in getting the certificate. The Indian textile manufacturers who are dependent on these suppliers for the raw material will have to either look at other suppliers or lose orders. For instance, a bed linen exporter in Tiruppur district imports polyester filament with functional properties from Turkey based on the demand of his European buyers. Though the imported filament constitutes just 6% of the product, the buyer has specified the source for the filament. Since the Turkey company is not interested in getting the BIS certificate, the exporter in Tiruppur has lost an order to Pakistan. Furthermore, BIS officials have to visit the manufacturing unit abroad before issuing the certificate and this process is yet to be completed for all suppliers who have applied for the BIS registration. There is no clarity on the fibres that were shipped before the certification and which will reach India in the coming days.

The textile buyers, be it domestic or international, have established a supply chain over the years and when there are constraints because of certification, the value chain is disrupted.

What is the way forward?
Be it viscose or polyester, some varieties of the fibre have special functional properties and separate HS (Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System) code when imported. But, these are bundled in the QCO and thus have uniform quality standards. The textile industry imports just small quantities of such fibres and restricting its availability will deny Indian consumers of niche products. The textile industry is of the view that import of speciality fibres that are used as blends with other fibres should be made available without restriction. Also, any overseas applicant for the BIS certificate should get it without delay after inspection. Several textile units use lower grade fibres that are generated from rejects and wastes and these are not covered under the QCO. There is also a fear of costs going up for basic garments. Further, polyester spun yarn mills in the MSME sector need capital support to set up labs to test products. The QCO should be implemented only after the ambiguities are cleared and the anomalies set right, says the industry.

The BIS standards are mandatory for viscose staple fibre from March 29 and for five polyester products, including polyester staple fibre and polyester spun yarn from April 3.

THE GIST

- Quality Control Orders (QCO) have been issued for fibres that constitute the basic raw materials for majority of the Indian textile and clothing industry.
- The overseas fibre manufacturers sell not only to India but to other countries too. Getting the certificate from the BIS involves a cost and and hence not all are interested in getting the certificate. The Indian textile manufacturers who are dependent on these suppliers for the raw material will have to either look at other suppliers or lose orders.
- The textile industry says that import of speciality fibres that are used as blends with other fibres should be made available without restriction.

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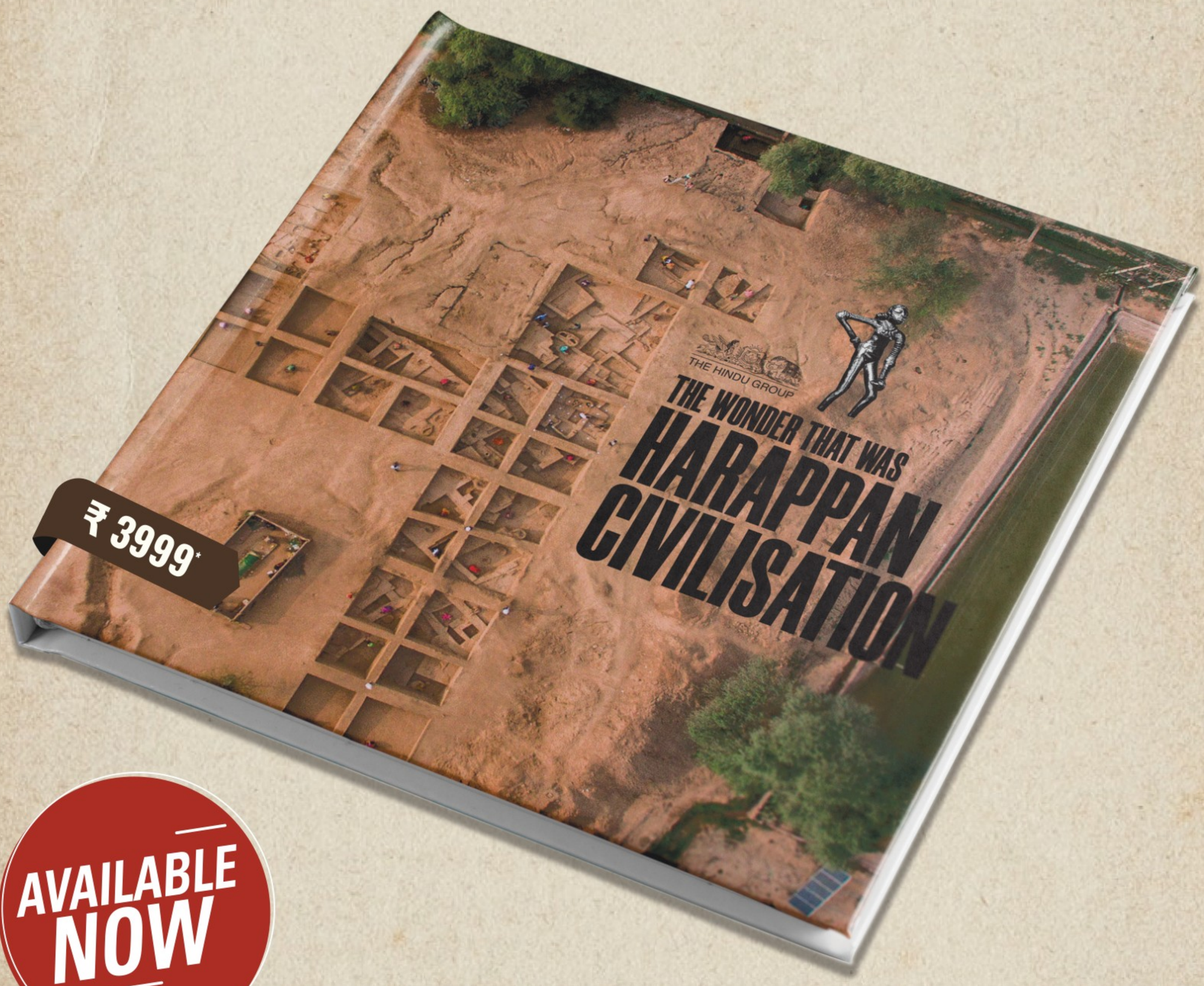

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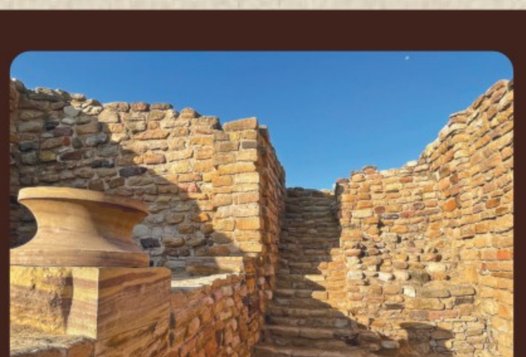

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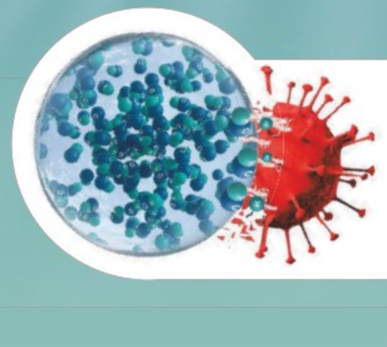

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IN THE LIMELIGHT

How the John Wick franchise revitalised an entire genre

The Keanu Reeves series, apart from reinventing the action genre, has also created a watershed moment, opening up a new avenue for action films to gain inspiration from

Gopinath Rajendran

Action, like many simple words, has an array of definitions with the most common ones being movement, an act of will, an engagement between two factions and the bringing about of an alteration by force. Incidentally, all those definitions also sound completely felicitous to mean fight, and in this context, action in films – like several filmmaking aspects that have evolved over time – as a genre, has gone through its own stages of development.

Keanu Reeves as John Wick in *John Wick 4*.AP

The different phases of action

It started around the 1920s and 30s that was characterised by sword-fighting and swashbuckling heroes like Douglas Fairbanks; moved to the Westerns and war films of the 40s and 50s that gave us classics like Gary Cooper's *Man of the West* and Gregory Peck's *The Big Country*; saw the birth of Ian Fleming's *James Bond* in the 60s with the 70s introducing us to gritty, urban crime dramas like *Dirty Harry* while also getting paving way for martial art films. The 80s is when the idea of summer blockbusters began with actioners like *Lethal Weapon* as well as shows like *The A-Team*.

The 90s, with its rise in budgets, CGI revolution and sequels, turned out to be a new era for the action genre and cemented the positions of stars like Schwarzenegger and Stallone as action heroes thanks to their testosterone-fuelled films. The new millennium perfected what the genre became by then only to go on a decline. While superhero films tried changing the terminology for the genre, action films needed that one good film/franchise to bring it back to its old glory. Enter *John Wick*, a crucial franchise that has over the years redefined the genre by marrying old-school cinema action with today's fast-paced technology-aided theatrics and modern sensibilities.

Out of ammo

Right before our puppy-loving hitman was forced out of his retirement, action films had taken a back seat in Hollywood. Of course, there were pleasant surprises at irregular intervals like the *Taken* and *Mission: Impossible* franchises or the larger-than-life *Mad Max: Fury Road*, *Snowpiercer* and *Pacific Rim*. At a time when Indonesian projects like *The Raid* and its sequel were winning hearts for their up-close action sequences, Hollywood was mounting extravagant action set-pieces set against the backdrop of superhero films. But what the film industry desperately needed was, pun intended, a hands-on approach towards action. In other words, Hollywood needed gun-fu, a portmanteau of gun and kung fu. It's a style of sophisticated close-quarters gunfight resembling a martial arts battle that combines firearms with hand-to-hand combat and traditional melee weapons that originated in Hong Kong action films and begged to be perfected by American films. Action veteran John Woo popularised it and it was incidentally Keanu Reeves' *Matrix* films which made it famous in the West. Unsurprisingly, when Reeves decides to star in a new film made by his Matrix stunt double Chad Stahelski and stunt co-ordinator David Leitch, it was destined to reinvent the genre.

A cut apart

Technically speaking, what makes the *John Wick* series stand apart is the way it took the best parts of yesteryear's action sequences and coupled them with today's highly-choreographed techniques. The hand-to-hand combat sequences or the ones using melee weapons look similar to the ones we've enjoyed in classics like Lau Kar-leung's *The 36th Chamber of Shaolin* (1978), Jimmy Wang Yu's *Master of the Flying Guillotine* (1977), Jackie Chan's *Young Master* (1980) and Tsui Hark's *Once Upon a Time in China* (1991). But Stahelski and Leitch focused on long single takes, abstaining from the rapid cuts and closeup shots that have become synonymous with action films.

Though the action and the unique pattern in which it was shot, cut and exhibited is the major reason for the *John Wick* franchise success, it's not the only factor. Gun-fu, which started with Woo's *A Better Tomorrow* (1986), launched the heroic bloodshed genre in Hong Kong. The genre, apart from revolving around stylised action sequences, focused on dramatic themes such as brotherhood, duty, honour and redemption. The *John Wick* films, with their concepts of crime syndicates, fealty to the High Table and "business" conducted by adhering to the world's strict codes, follow the genre's specifics to the T. Though it was Robert Rodriguez's *Desperado* (1995) which repurposed gun-fu for the West, it was *The Matrix* films that familiarised it and *John Wick* revolutionised it.

With action out of the way, the inspirations for staging and storytelling were, obviously, one too many. Director Chad Stahelski cited *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966), *Point Blank* (1967), *Le Cercle Rouge* (1970), and *The Killer* (1989) as influences for the films while Kolstad attributed the works of Alistair MacLean and Stephen King. Stahelski and Leitch also drew inspiration from the works of Sergio Leone, Akira Kurosawa, Steve McQueen, Lee Marvin, William Friedkin and Sam Peckinpah.

All guns blazing

To come up with the perfection they expect from the shoot, Stahelski and Leitch slogged it off at the pre-production by getting their cinematographers into rehearsals and acclimatising them to their style of heavily choreographed action scenes. For the firearm sequences, they decided to employ the '3-gun' style, based on a shooting competition involving a handgun, a rifle, and a shotgun. This came in handy for accomplishing the close-quarters sequences where Wick wields the gun like a sword and finishes his enemies. Almost all the action sequences are shot with wide angles making every punch, every block and every bullet shot seen and felt.

The fact that Reeves, thanks to films like the *Matrix* franchise, *47 Ronin* and *Man of Tai Chi*, is backed by years of action training, came in very handy for the makers. "When you watch a Jackie Chan movie, you know Jackie Chan is doing the kung-fu, you know Jackie Chan jumped off the building. So who do you love? You love Jackie Chan," Stahelski said during the making of the first instalment. "We wanted to do that with *John Wick*. And with longer takes, wider shots, seeing the intricate choreography, you get to see Keanu doing all that stuff. 90 per cent of what you see is Keanu Reeves. So do you need any backstory? Do you need another character to open a folder that says, 'John Wick is a badass?' Or would you rather just see it? Does Keanu Reeves have any credibility problem with *John Wick*? No. He is a badass."

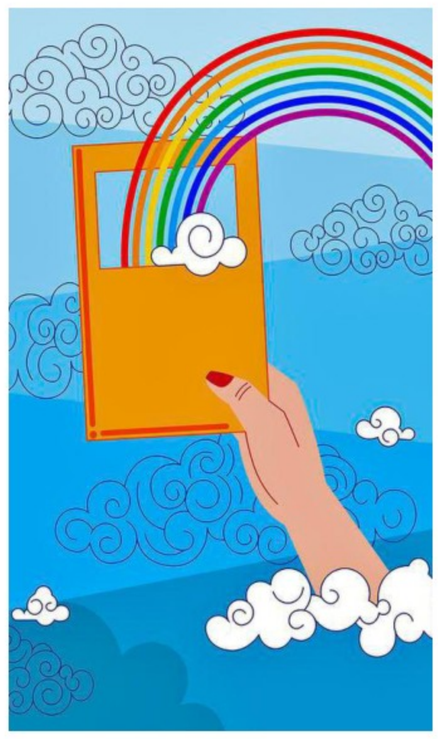
For the unversed, Reeves was 49 when the franchise began and despite the experience, he spent four months preparing for his character and the training included Japanese jiu-jitsu, Brazilian jiu-jitsu, standing judo, tactical 3-gun and Center Axis Relock, a shooting system designed for close-quarter combat. What this results in are action sequences that are violent and deadly but also charming, pleasing and eerily satisfying to watch. Add in some carefully calculated lights and colours, along with setting the sequences in locations that exude a unique personality – such as nightclubs or heritage buildings – and what we get past the massacres and macabre is a piece of art. This has only evolved over the last four films with the latest outing, *John Wick: Chapter 4* being the best of the lot when it comes to action and how it's framed.

The aftershock

The John Wick films, apart from reinventing the action wheel, have also created a watershed moment, opening up a new avenue for action films to traverse on. The team behind it came up with Charlize Theron's *Atomic Blonde* which felt like a film straight out of the same universe, and so did Bob Odenkirk's *Nobody* which even reproduced the franchise's self-awareness and unique sense of humour.

Away from the team, 2016's Ethan Hawke-starrer *In a Valley of Violence* was about a man taking it out on a group for threatening his dog. Veteran Jackie Chan too returned to the heroic bloodshed genre with *The Foreigner* while Jennifer Lawrence's *Red Sparrow* and Jennifer Garner's *Peppermint* played the same game with a female protagonist dealing the cards. *Guns Akimbo* (2019), *Gunpowder Milkshake* (2021), *Jolt* (2021) and *The Protégé* (2021) were also inspired by the franchise. Similar to stunt directors turning directors with *John Wick*, *Avengers: Endgame* stunt coordinator turned director with *Extraction*, a film whose action sequences resembled Wick's fight poetry.

In less than a decade, John Wick has reclaimed the action genre that relied heavily on CGI, shaky camera movements, and quick edits. The meticulously designed action set-pieces, extensively-choreographed sequences and long takes that were possible because of impeccable writing made the franchise revitalise the genre. Rolling Stone named the series "The Last Great American Action-Movie Franchise" and given the current state of affairs within the action genre, that's a claim that cannot be easily disputed.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

K. Subrahmanian

"Mr. N. S. N. Prasad of Kennedy Road, Machilipatnam, wants to know the\ difference between 'verify' and 'corroborate'."

" 'To verify' means 'to establish the truth or correctness of by examination or demonstration'.

We must verify his statement.

When you verify, you want to make sure that it is true. 'Verify' is from Latin 'veritas', 'true'. 'Veritable' and 'very' are also from 'veritas'. 'Very' originally meant 'true'. 'Corroborate' means 'confirm (person, statement) by evidence'. When a statement is corroborated, it is made strong.

His statement has been corroborated by his friend.

'Corroborate' is from Latin 'Corroboratus' 'to strengthen'."

"Mr. P. Bhaskar, Mahakavi Bharatinagar, Madras, wants to know the meaning of 'scot-free'."

" 'To go scot-free', 'to get off scot-free', 'to escape scot-free', means 'to go unharmed', 'to go unpunished'.When a person gets off scot-free, he escapes deserved punishment. 'Scot' originally meant 'an amount of money assessed or paid', 'tax allotment'. Originally a person who went scot-free was a person who escaped payment of taxes. Now it means a person who escapes unpunished."

"Mr. Dennis Paul, R & D, IT1, Bangalore, wants to know the pronunciation of 'ancient'."

" 'An' rhymes with 'stain', 'pain'. 'Ci' is pronounced 'sh' as in 'should'. The 'e' in 'ancient' is pronounced like the last sound in 'China'. The stress is on the first syllable."

"Mr. A. Ramaswamy, Central Avenue, Korattur, Madras and Mr. K. V. S. B. Ramanujam, Godugupet, Machilipatnam, want to know whether 'hotel' should be pronounced 'hotel' or 'otel'."

"The 'h' in 'hotel' is pronounced. There are some who pronounce it 'otel'. But it is considered rather old-fashioned pronunciation. There was a time when words like 'humour', 'hotel' were pronounced without the initial sound 'h'. Now the initial 'h' is pronounced."

"Mr. A. A. Aluwalliah of Ludhiana wants to know the meaning of the idiom 'as sure as eggs is eggs'."

"It means something definite, something certain.

He will be here as sure as eggs is eggs.

The idiom has been used since the seventeenth century. It is a corruption of the mathematical statement 'as sure as X is X'. 'Eggs' is a corruption of 'X'."

Published in The Hindu on June 30, 1987

THE DAILY QUIZ

As the second film of the Ponniyin Selvan series drops its trailer, here is a quiz on the mighty Chola dynasty and its legacy

Venkataraghavan Srinivasan

QUESTION 1
Which famous Chola queen was known for her patronage of the arts and literature?

QUESTION 2
Which famous temple was built by Rajaraja Chola I in the 11th century?

QUESTION 3
Which Chola king was arguably the founder of Chola's thalassocracy, by begining his conquest of Ceylon in the first half of the 10th century?

QUESTION 4
Which Chola king built the famous Airavatesvara Temple in Darasuram?

QUESTION 5
Which famous Chinese traveler visited the court of Chola king Rajendra Chola I?

Visual question:
By what name are these inscriptions of Parantaka 1 that describe the evolution of the administrative system through committees and one of the earliest models of democracy in the sub-continent known as? FILE PHOTO

Questions and Answers of the previous day's daily quiz: 1. Van Gogh's nationality. **Ans: He was Dutch.**
2. The Japanese prints Van Gogh collected. **Ans: ukiyo-e**
3. The painting that the artist is certain to have sold during his career before his suicide in 1890. **Ans: *The Red Vineyard***
4. This individual plays Van Gogh in Akira Kurosawa's film *Dreams*. **Ans: Martin Scorsese**
5. The set of seven similar paintings of which five are in museums. **Ans: Sunflowers in a vase**
6. The only artist who took up Vincent's offer to set up an artists' community at his house. **Ans: Paul Gauguin**
7. This Van Gogh painted portrait fetched $82.5 million. **Ans: *Portrait of Dr. Gachet***
Visual: This painting is considered to be the genius' very last painting. **Ans: *Tree Roots***
Early Birds: M. Suresh Kumar| Rashmi Rekha Dash| Saachi Shukla| Rakesh R| K. N. Viswanathan

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

Word of the day

Fealty:
the loyalty that citizens owe to their country (or subjects to their sovereign)

Synonyms: allegiance

Usage: *He ended up betraying his sovereign even though he swore fealty to her.*

Pronunciation: bit.ly/fealtypro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ˈfiːəlti/, /ˈfiːlti/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

Padmabhushana, Karnataka Ratna, Basavashree Awardee,
Trividha Dasohi, Maha Shivayogigalu, Paramapoojya

Dr. Sree Sree Sivakumara Mahaswamiji's

116th Birthday Celebrations
and
Guruvandana Mahothsava

01-04-2023 Saturday, 11.00 A.M.
Sree Siddaganga Math, Tumakuru

Hearty Welcome to the participating Pontiffs,
Political Leaders, Dignitaries,
Sree Math's Devotees - Well Wishers and the Public

All are Cordially Invited

Siddaganga Medical College and Research Institute

Dr. Sree Sree Sivakumara Mahaswamiji Road, Tumakuru

Siddaganga Medical College & Research Institute

- State-of-the-art facilities
- Highly qualified Faculty members
- Super Speciality Facilities
- Expert and Experienced Doctors

Sree Math Provides

Health Service
along with
Trividha Dasoha (Sacrament)

INBRIEF

48th convocation of IIMB to be held today

The 48th convocation of the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (IIMB) will be held on Friday. Baba Kalyani, Padma Bhushan recipient and chairman & Managing Director, Bharat Forge Ltd., will be the chief guest and deliver the convocation address. "Degrees will be awarded to students of PhD programme and MBA programmes - PG Programme in Enterprise Management (PGPEM), Executive PG Programme in Management (EPGP), PG Programme in Business Analytics (PGP-BA), and PG Programme in Management (PGP). The awards will include gold medals for best all-round performance, first and second ranks," a press release said.

Canara Bank ties up with NPCI Bharat BillPay to process payments from Oman

To facilitate utility bill payments for Indian diaspora, Canara Bank has teamed up with Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS). This facility was launched by Canara Bank in coordination with Bharat BillPay Ltd., the wholly-owned subsidiary of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), and Musandam Exchange, Oman, on March 29. This tie-up will enable the Indian diaspora to make payments towards utility bills, school fees, municipal taxes, and so on in India from Oman. The move will provide a convenient and hassle-free payment option for NRIs, said a release.

Text & Context

A weekday feature on *The Hindu* epaper (epaper.thehindu.com) carries explainers, special articles and a quiz. In the latest issue (March 31, Friday), the following explainer is available:

- Scientists spot piezoelectric effect in liquids for the first time **bit.ly/piezoelectriceffect**

You can use your smartphone's inbuilt features to access this article. If it's an Android phone, use Google Lens to read and tap the url to access the article. If it's an iPhone, use Live Text on camera to do the same.

Election: Urban apathy a huge challenge in IT hub

As against the 72.44% voter turnout in Karnataka in the 2018 Assembly polls, the four divisions in Bengaluru - BBMP South, North, Central, and Bengaluru Urban - had recorded around 55% polling

Afshan Yasmeen
BENGALURU

The lowest voter turnout in the State in the past polls has been from the IT hub of Bengaluru. FILE PHOTO

Apart from money power, urban apathy is another huge challenge that has been flagged by the Election Commission of India in the Karnataka elections. The lowest voter turnout in the State in the past elections has always been from the IT hub of Bengaluru.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar said as against the 72.44% voter turnout in Karnataka during the 2018 Assembly elections, the four divisions in Bengaluru - BBMP South, North, Central and Bengaluru Urban - had recorded around 55% polling. Over 88% of the 8,615 polling stations in these four divisions (across the 28 Assembly constituencies) are in urban areas. In 2013 too, as against the 71.83% polling in the State, the IT hub had recorded 52.83% polling. In 2008, it was even worse at 47.3% in the four Bengaluru electoral divisions.

While the voting percentage in BBMP South was 55.04% in 2013, it further fell to 51.98% in 2018. In BBMP North, the voting percentage declined from 56.58 in 2013 to 53.47 in 2018. Likewise, in BBMP Central, the voting percentage dropped from 57.71 in 2013 to 55.18 in 2018. In Bengaluru Urban, it fell from 62.03% in 2013 to 57% in 2018.

"Apathy in the urban electorate is a trend observed in elections across the country. What is worrisome is that the voting percentage in urban areas has been decreasing over the years. It was seen in the States of Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh, which went to polls last year. In the 2019 general elections, the urban constituencies - Hyderabad, Patna Sahib, Secunderabad, Kalyan, Pune, Thane, Mumbai South, Kanpur, and Allahabad showed a similar trend," said Mr. Kumar.

Trilochan Sastry, professor at IIM Bangalore and founder of Association for Democratic Reforms, said low voter turnout in urban areas is a trend the world over. "Urban voters do not see any connection between their life and voting. They do not see any significant change in their lives even if the government changes. Besides, half of the urban population is floating," he said.

The Election Commission has taken up awareness activities such as electoral literacy clubs and voter awareness forums. It plans to leverage Bengaluru's reputation as a knowledge and IT hub. In association with IISc, start-ups, educational institutions, and IT professionals, the EC has been conducting 'Electhon'. Over 2,000 youth are participating in the 'Electhon', which will go on till April 30. Manoj Kumar Meena, Chief Electoral Officer for Karnataka, told *The Hindu* that teams of officials are visiting polling stations with the lowest turnout to interact with communities and find reasons for the poor participation. "Better voting experience is one of the major strategies for improving the turnout," he said.

Mid-week voting on purpose

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

To avoid people from taking advantage of "voting day holiday" by clubbing it with the weekend, the Election Commission deliberately scheduled the elections on May 10, a Wednesday. Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar said voting on a Wednesday will make it difficult for people to take a long holiday. "Had it been a Monday, it could have been combined with Saturday and Sunday, and had it been Tuesday, one could have gone out by taking a day off," he said.

BBMP reaches out to RWAs; to advertise on delivery apps

The BBMP Commissioner holding a meeting on voter awareness with various Resident Welfare Associations on Wednesday.

Darshan Devaiah B.P.
BENGALURU

After the Election Commission (EC) raised concerns over the urban apathy towards voting in Bengaluru, the BBMP has undertaken various initiatives to improve voter turnout under Systematic Voters Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP).

Karnataka Votes 2023

BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Giri Nath on Wednesday evening held a videoconference with representatives of Resident Welfare Associations (RWA) of all eight BBMP zones and requested them to vote and create awareness among the residents. The civic body has also created 2,900 Voters Awareness Forum (VAF) in various government and private offices.

Apart from reaching out to residents through MLAs, the BBMP also plans to reach out to citizens through social media campaigns. Mr. Giri Nath said: "As part of the awareness campaign, we will use platforms like Swiggy and Zomato to advertise to reach out to more people. We will also organise contests, bike rallies, and walkathons as part of the awareness."

The BBMP said it is implementing voter awareness programmes to reach migrant labourers, transgender community, other marginalised sections, women, senior citizens, youth, and first-time voters.

On the other hand, RWAs and apartment associations too have been doing their bit to up the voter turnout. The Bangalore Apartments' Federation (BAF) has been conducting awareness on voting from the past few months and have also launched a special campaign called ''Every Vote Matters (EVM)' in various apartment complexes and gated villas.

Vikram Rai, general secretary of BAF, said: "Under EVM, we were able to enrol many voters from apartments and other residential complexes. Now, along with BBMP, we will create awareness on voting."

Mohan Krishna, member of J.P. Nagar Resident Welfare Association, said: "City residents should know that voting is very important. If voters don't like the candidate, they can go for NOTA. Voting is our responsibility, hence our RWA is holding meetings with residents."

Universities hold campaigns to promote voting among youngsters, including first-timers

Jahnavi T.R.
BENGALURU

Upon the directions of the Election Commission and in association with Electoral Literacy Clubs set up by the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), colleges and universities across the city have been holding campaigns in the last couple of months to push students, who are first-time voters, to get their voter ID cards. Some universities have also taken up initiatives to promote voting in the campus.

The Bangalore Central University (BCU) has been holding the campaign at all affiliated colleges from the last one-and-a-half months. It has also identified nodal officers at every college to help students register on the electoral roll.

St. Joseph's University has set up a help desk on the campus for students

"We invited representatives from all the affiliated colleges and held an orientation programme for the voter awareness campaign. Workshops and live demonstrations to guide students about the registration process have been happening at all affiliated colleges. In one of our workshops in which BBMP officers, election officers, on-campus students, affiliated colleges students, and faculty members took part, around 300 first-time voters registered on the same day," said Lingaraja Gandhi, Vice-Chancellor, BCU.

Many universities are also encouraging their students to make use of the free time they get to register on the electoral roll. "We have been distributing pamphlets and making use of all the electronic billboards in our campuses to display election related messaging like "it is your right to vote" and the website that will lead them to the registration process. Since they arrive on campus in the morning and go home only by evening, we are providing them opportunities to register during their lunch break or after class hours," said J. Surya Prasad, Vice-Chancellor, PES University.

St. Joseph's University has set up a help desk on campus to assist students to use the election commission website and app to register. University officials said they got 780 first-time voters to register so far and the campaign is still going on.

Voters excited

Meanwhile, first-time voters said the chance to cast a vote has gotten them excited.

"I am excited to vote. I will cast my vote based on the service provided by the candidates to the residents of this constituency. I hope post elections, they give us good and clean infrastructure in our constituency," said Sanjana Shekar, resident of Kathriguppe.

"I could not vote during the last elections even though I was eligible as my voters' ID did not reach on time. This time, I got to know about the elections after seeing memes and news on social media. Road asphalting is going on everywhere, but I hope they continue to do such work even after elections," said Keerthana M.S., resident of Basavanagudi.

Board seeks additional police force at SSLC examination centres

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

As the poll bugle has been sounded, the Karnataka School Examination and Assessment Board (KSEAB) has requested the government for additional police forces to be deployed at class X examination centres to avoid any disturbance due to election campaigns and rallies to students. Class X exams begin on Friday.

Prohibitory orders

Gopalakrishna H.N., director, KSEAB, said: "To avoid malpractices and other disturbances, prohibitory orders have already been announced under Section 144 Code of Criminal Procedure in the 200-metre radius of exam centres. Police will be deployed in every centre. We have also asked for additional forces to avoid any trouble."

On Friday, the first language examination will be held in 3,3077 centres. This year, a total of 8,42,811 students have enrolled from 15,498 high schools for the class X examinations.

Millennials matter: Cong. launches campaign

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

With young and first-time voters showing a lack of interest to vote, the Congress on Thursday launched the 'Yuva Matha' campaign to attract youngsters to polling booths on May 10, the polling day of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly elections.

Under the platform 'Yuva Matha', the party will focus on first-time youth voters and those in the age group 18 to 23. 'Celebrate your vote' is the campaign theme coined by the party to attract young voters.

General secretary of the National Youth Congress M.S. Raksha Ramaiah and AICC general secretary Abhishek Dutta at a press conference in Bengaluru on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The number of young electors who attained the age of 18 between January 2022 and January 2023 was about 9.58 lakh in Karnataka.

General secretary of the National Youth Congress, M.S. Raksha Ramaiah, said: "Lack of interest and a careless attitude among the youth are the major reasons for poor voting." The platform highlights the importance of casting vote among first-time voters and the youth, followed by issues faced by them.

The initiative is to create awareness by educating the youth and catering to their issues, resulting in the betterment of their lives, said AICC general secretary Abhishek Dutta and Mr. Ramaia . Youth Congress workers will visit colleges and universities and prevail upon the youth the importance of participating in the democratic process, he said.

Under Yuva Nidhi, the party has announced providing a monthly allowance of ₹3,000 to unemployed youth for two years and ₹1,500 to diploma holders.

Mr. Ramaiah said the Congress government would fill 2.5 lakh vacant posts in the government and also create employment opportunities to the extent of 10 to 15 lakhs per year in the private sector.

Two killed in accident on Ballari Road

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Two persons riding a bike were killed in an accident on the busy Ballari Road on Thursday morning. The deceased have been identified as Gudar Ram, in his early thirties, and Jugu Raj Prajapat, 48, hailing from Rajasthan and residents of the city.

Gudar Ram was riding towards the city from Kempegowda International Airport with Jugu Raj Prajapat when the accident occurred. Gudar Ram was overspeeding and rammed his bike into the road median after losing control. Gudar Ram suffered severe injuries to his abdomen and was killed on the spot. Jugu Raj Prajapat suffered severe head injuries and was rushed to a private hospital, where he succumbed. A case has been registered.

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Venue: Pride Hotel Conference Hall
Time: 3:00pm - 5:00pm
Date: Sunday, April 2, 2023
www.ssla.edu.in
Dr. Shweta Sinha Deshpande, Director, SSLA
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BHARAT COKING COAL LIMITED
(A Mini Ratna Company)
(A subsidiary of Coal India Limited)
NOTICE
All the tenders* issued by Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL) for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on website of BCCL www.bcclweb.in, Coal India Limited (CIL) e-procurement portal https://coalindiatenders.nic.in and Central Public Procurement Portal https://eprocure.gov.in. In addition, procurement is also done through GeM portal https://gem.gov.in.
*This is applicable to all Open (Domestic / Global) Tenders issued through e-procurement portal of CIL.

SMART CITY THIRUVANANTHAPURAM LIMITED
CIN U75302KL2017SGC05027

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited for the following projects of Smart City Thiruvananthapuram Limited Project Area, 1) Request for proposal RFP for Selection of Contractor for Development of Smart Roads and Underground Ducting Including Utility Shifting of Water Supply and Power lines in ABD area Under Smart (Corporation Roads) in Thiruvananthapuram.

Sl. No	Name of Project	E-Tender ID	PAC Amount (Exclusive Of GST)	Bid Submission Last Date
Selection of Contractor for Development of Smart Roads and Underground Ducting Including Utility Shifting of Water Supply and Power lines in ABD area Under Smart (Corporation Roads) in Thiruvananthapuram.				
1	Road ID 41 (Kothuval to Sabhapathi kovil street Road)	2023_ SCTLT_550644_2	Rs.4,57,70,352	03/04/2023
2	Road ID 42 (KK Road)	2023_ SCTLT_550795_2	Rs.2,59,55,590	03/04/2023
3	Road ID 43 (Marakkada Road)	2023_ SCTLT_550815_2	Rs.2,29,11,634	03/04/2023
4	Road ID 90A (Dharmalayam Road)	2023_ SCTLT_551327_2	Rs.2,51,54,527	03/04/2023

Date and Time of Opening Price Bid: To Be Intimated Separately to Technically Qualified Bidders by e-mail. All the RFP documents and details are available on the e-Procurement Website. Bids are only accepted online on the Website **https://etenders.kerala.gov.in**

(sd/-) CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
SMART CITY THIRUVANANTHAPURAM Ltd.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby notified that, my clients have agreed to purchase the Schedule Property from its Owners: **Smt.PRABHAMANI.C.S. W/o late H.P.KRISHNAMURTHY** and her children **Smt.LATHA.K and Smt.SHRUTHI.K,** residing at: No.371, Hani, 7th A Main, Near Crazy Park, BEML 5th Stage, Rajarajeshwari Nagar, Bangalore-560098.

The said Owners have represented that, they have lost/misplaced all original title deeds and documents of the Schedule property and in this regard they have filed a Police Complaint on 16/03/2023 with Bangalore City Police unit. Further the Owners represent that they have not deposited or otherwise handed over the original title deeds and documents to any person/s or Bank or institution and that the Owners have a freehold subsisting marketable title to the Schedule property.

Apart from the said Owners, if any other person/s have any manner of right, title and or interest or claim or charge or lien over the Schedule property or otherwise have any lawful objection/s for sale of the Schedule Property by the aforesaid Owners, they are hereby called upon to file their objection/s in writing, along with the photocopies of documents on which they rely, with the undersigned, within 10days from the date of publication of this notice. Objection/s received thereafter will not be binding on my clients.

SCHEDULE

All that piece and parcel of the House property bearing Municipal No.30/1 (Old No.30) PID No.49-62-30/1, measuring East to West 37 ft 10½ inches and North to South 17 ft 6 inches, with a building thereon, situated at Shankara Park, Shankarpuram, Bengaluru and bounded on:

East by : Cross Road
West by : Arya's property
North by : Indiramma's property
South by : Mutt's property

Sd/- Goutam Chand S.F
Advocate
Goutam Associates
No.60, 2nd Floor, Kanakapura Road,
Basavanagudi, Bangalore – 560 004

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISRTY OF DEFENCE
EX-SERVICEMEN CONTRIBUTARY HEALTH SCHEME
STATION HQ (ECHS CELL), JALAHALLI
PHONE: 080-23451032 , E-mail:stnhqjalahalli410@gmail.com

1. ECHS invites application to engage following Medical , Para Medical & Non Medical Staff on contractual basis in ECHS Polyclinic Tumkur for a period of one year r**enewable for additional period of one year/till attaining the maximum age subject to performance of candidates/ other conditions** according to the criteria as mentioned against each post:-

EMPLOYMENT NOTICE

Sl No	Appointment	Minimum Qualification	Number of Vacancies	Fixed Remuneration
01	**Dental Officer**	BDS, Minimum 05 years work experience.	01	Rs. 75,000/-
02	**Clerk**	Graduate/ Class - I Clerical trade (Armed Forces). Minimum 05 years work experience.	01	Rs. 16,800/-
03	**Safaiwala**	Literate, Minimum 05 years work experience.	01	Rs. 16,800/-
04	**Chowkidar**	Class 8th or GD trade for Armed Forces personnel.	01	Rs. 16,800/-

2.For term & condition, Application Form & Remuneration: Kindly see our website www.echs.gov.in . for additional details, please contact Station HQ ECHS Cell Jalahalli at telephone No. 080-23451032 and email ID stnhqjalahalli410@gmail.com. Also approach concerned ECHS Polyclinic for details. Preference will be given to Ex-servicemen.

3.Last date for receipt of application as per format given at our website. Application as per requisite format along with self attested photo copies of testimonials in support of education qualifications and work experience will be submitted to OIC Station HQ ECHS Cell, C/o Air Force Station Jalahalli, Bangalore (KA) – 560013 by 21 April 2023 in duplicate. Any applications received after last date will not be accepted.

4.Interview Date, Timing & Venue. Candidate must reach Station HQ ECHS Cell, Jalahalli (East) at 0730 hrs on 26 April 2023 for the interview to be held between 0900 hrs to 1430 hrs. Candidate must bring all original documents certIficates/Marks Sheet /Degree of 10th/Matric, 12th & Graduation /Post Graduation / Diploma/Course, work experience and discharge book, PPO, service records and two Passport size color photographs at the time of interview. No TA/DA is admissible. Only candidates meeting the Qualitative Requirement may apply.

LOST & FOUND

I **K. Praveen Reddy S/o Mr. K. Pichhi Reddy** would like to inform the general public that I have Misplaced my Original **General Power of Attorney** Document No. **Identification: 1074 / Bk4 / 2011,** registered at Sub Registrar Kelamangalam, Property bearing IN Kothagondapalli Village of Hosur Taluk, Krishnagiri District, attached to the Registration District of Krishnagiri, **Sy. No. 679, Dry Extent in 5.40, Asst Rs.6.06, UDR Sy. No. 676/2, Dry Extent in Hec1.66.5, Asst Rs.4.61, in the this an extent of Acre 1.70, land has been converted in to house plots** in which as per layout plan **plot No.87** of Vacant House.

In case if any one finds the document, the same may be returned to the undersigned.

K.Praveen Reddy
No.18 Sumukha, 24th Main,
HBCS Layout, 2nd Phase,
JP Nagar, Bengaluru - 560078
Phone .9341745559

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PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, KOTHAPALLI Madhukar Davidson, Son of K.M.Raju, Resident of OMQ No.225/4, Golden Jubilee Airforce, Officers Enclave, Artillery Road, Jeevan Kendra Layout, Jogupalya, Agram Post, Bengaluru-560007 have changed my name from Kothapalli Madhukar Davidson to Kumar Madhukar David vide affidavit No. IN-KA993216241598n98V dated 02-03-2023 before Notary A.R.Muneer Ahmed at Bengaluru.

PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, VINOTH SHANKAR S/o. SHANKAR Age 35 Years, Address: Flat No:003 Phase – II Bavisha Urban homes, Sy. No.15/2, Ittina Havelli Layout, Kadaagrahara Village, sompura, gate, Sarjapur – Marathahalli Rd, Bengaluru, Karnataka 562125 shall henceforth be know as VINOTH SANKAR. VINOTH SHANKAR 31 March 2023

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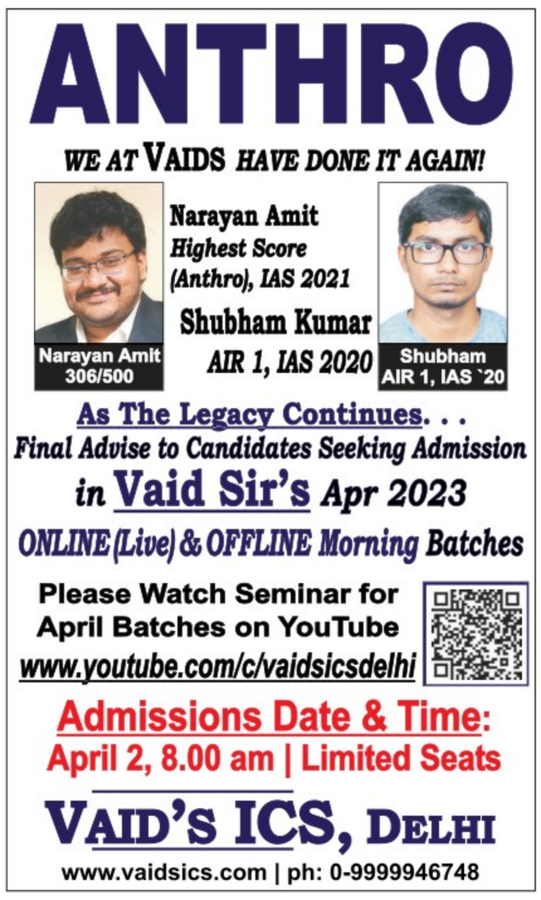

PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I Alok Gupta S/o Shitala Prasad Gupta, residing at 104, Tower 7 Oceanus Vista Apartment, Sy No 18 Near B R S Global School, Kasavanahalli, Bengaluru, Karnataka - 560035, have changed the name of minor Daughter Anusmita Gupta aged 11 years and she shall hereafter be known as Abhishree Gupta for all purposes in future

I Mallappa Itnal S/o Mahadev, residing at Sanganatti, Madhabhavi, Bagalkot, Karnataka - 587312, have changed my name to Mallikarjun Itnal for all purposes in future.

I Vuddar Vaishnavi D/o Vuddar Madhava Rao R/o 003, G Blk, Krishna Diamond Apts, Sahakar Nagar, B'luru-560092 have changed my name to Vuddar Vaishnavi Rao for all purposes

LOST & FOUND

I, SHARMISHTA Hegde of The Valley School, Bengaluru, D/O Gopalakrishna Hegde, residing at No 423E , 2nd floor, 7th MAIN , Vijaya Bank Layout, Bannerghatta Road, Bangalore 560076 I have lost my Original Certificate of ICSE 10th Class, Exam Year 2021 Having Index No TT 40026164 and Roll No.1211354/027 Passed out from ICSE New Delhi. Finder Contact: 9900165438 and return to above mentioned address.

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE HON'BLE COURT OF THE JUDGE: ADDL. FAMILY COURT AT: VISAKHAPATNAM
F.C.O.P.1509/2021

Between :
Smt. Ayyalasomayajula Baalaatripura ...Petitioner
And
Ayyalasomayajula Narasinga Rao Sharma @ Narasinga Rao
...Respondent

NOTICE

To, **The Respondent: Ayyalasomayajula Narasinga Rao Sharma @ Narasinga Rao**, S/o. late Kasipati Sharma, Senior Store Supervisor in Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Ltd., # 10, 16th Cross Road, G D Prak Extension, Vyalikaval, Malleshwara, Bengaluru, Karnataka State.

Please take notice that the above F.C.O.P.1509/2021 filed by the petitioner against the respondent for decree of divorce, dissolving the marriage, under Section 13 (1-a) (1-b) of Hindu Marriage Act 1955 and the matter stands posted to 18-04-2023 for your appearance. You are hereby required to appear before the Hon'ble Court either in person or through duly instructed Advocate on **18-04-2023** at **10:30A.M** in the above Court to answer all material questions, failing which the matter will be heard and determined in your absence.

KATTA JAGANNADHAM, Advocate
Visakhapatnam, (A.P) **Cell: 9440788988**

ISRO releases images of Earth captured by its EOS-06 satellite

The EOS-06 is envisaged to observe ocean colour data, sea surface temperature, and wind vector data for use in oceanography, climatic, and meteorological applications

Hemanth C.S.
BENGALURU

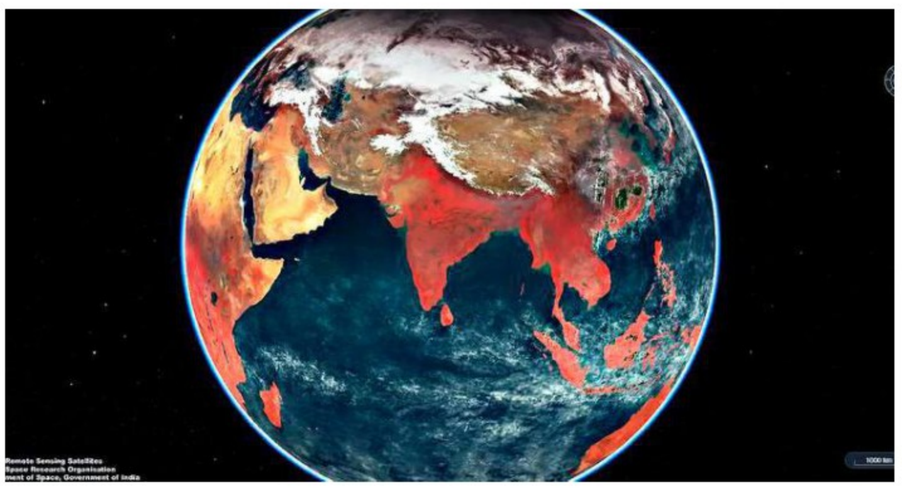

Image of the Earth captured by the satellite released by Indian Space Research Organisation.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has released images of Earth captured by the EOS-06 satellite. The space agency said that the images are a mosaic generated by the ISRO's National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC). "NRSC/ISRO has generated a global False Colour Composite (FCC) mosaic from the images captured by the Ocean Colour Monitor (OCM) payload on board EOS-06," the space agency said.

It further added that the mosaic with 1 km spatial resolution is generated by combining 2939 individual images, after processing 300 GB data to show the Earth as seen during February 1 and 15. "OCM senses the Earth in 13 distinct wavelengths to provide information about global vegetation cover on Land and Ocean Biota for global oceans," ISRO added.

The EOS-06 third generation satellite in the Oceansat series was launched by ISRO onboard the PSLV-C54 along with eight Nanosatellites on November 26.

EOS-06 provides continued services of Oceansat-2 with enhanced payload capability and carries four payloads OCM-, Sea Surface Temperature Monitor, Ku-Band Scatterometer, ARGOS.

The EOS-06 is envisaged to observe ocean colour data, sea surface temperature and wind vector data for use in oceanography, climatic and meteorological applications.

The satellite also supports value-added products such as potential fishing zone using chlorophyll, SST and wind speed and land-based geophysical parameters.

Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies grants ₹100 cr. to set up 'Centre for Brain and Mind'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies (RNP) on Thursday announced a grant of ₹100 crore to the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) and the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) to set up the 'Centre for Brain and Mind'.

The centre will further cutting-edge research to understand the causes, correlates, and course of five major illnesses - schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, dementia, and addiction, and explore potential interventions and treatments for them, said a release.

Under this MoU, the foundation will support activities of the centre for five years starting April 2023. Over five years, the centre will simultaneously pursue two tracks - long-term research and building capacity for both research and practice in the mental health field, said the release.

Pandemic effect

Commenting on the grant, Rohini Nilekani, chairperson, RNP, said: "Mental health is an area that demands more attention and support. The recent pandemic brought out this need even more starkly. Through this grant, I hope that a collaboration between two apex institutions of this country will provide globally relevant insights, evidence and pathways for better treatment for millions of people in India and the world."

Speaking about the potential of this grant, Pratima Murthy, director, NIMHANS, said that NIMHANS has been collaborating with NCBS and inStem to study a large number of families of patients with severe mental illnesses and generate a longitudinal cohort. "The in-depth biological and clinical assessment of this cohort has immense potential for breakthrough discoveries, with implications in turn for translation into better care for persons with mental illnesses," she said.

Novel medicines

L.S Shashidhara, director, NCBS-TIFR, commented that the project would allow insights into mental illness and how it develops and impacts brain function. "Such understanding will enable the development of novel medicines," he said.

Metro users can now buy RuPay NCMC

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Namma Metro commuters can now buy RuPay National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) from Thursday. These cards can be used in Namma Metro as well as other metros and public transport across the country compliant with RuPay NCMC.

The card was first used by Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he inaugurated the Whitefield-K.R. Puram metro line recently. Anjum Parvez, MD, Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd. (BMRCL), had then said that BMRCL was in talks with BMTC for the bus corporation to accept NCMC on its trips.

Commuters can buy RuPay NCMC across Ticket Office Machines counters of any metro station and at RBL Bank branches in the city. The commuters can purchase an NCMC by submitting a KYC form available at counters and paying a minimum amount of ₹100 of which ₹50 will be in the form of recharge.

These cards can also be purchased online on nammametro.ongo.co.in or Namma ONGO mobile app. The registration number allotted can be shown at the metro station and the card can be collected. The cards can also be recharged both offline and online.

Family robbed by couple who joined as domestic help two months ago

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A couple hailing from Nepal, who joined the house of a veterinary doctor as a security guard and a domestic help about two months ago, tied up the doctor's wife and robbed her of ₹13 lakh worth of jewellery and an iPhone in Govindapura. Recently, the South East Division Police had cracked two similar cases where couples hailing from Nepal posed as job seekers, joined households as domestic help only to rob them later.

Arshan Shahid, the doctor, was staying in Veerannapalya with his wife Lubna and their two children. Around two months ago, Deepak and Anjali joined the household and gained the trust of the family.

On Wednesday, Deepak and Anjali allegedly let two of their associates into the house. They tied up Lubna in a room, threatened her with dire consequences and snatched the key to the cupboard and fled with the articles. Lubna raised an alarm and neighbours rescued her. The Govindapura police are trying to track down the suspects.

Police Commissioner C.H. Pratap Reddy had recently appealed to citizens to verify backgrounds and seek at least two ID cards from those they were recruiting as house help.

Religious fervour

A procession being taken out on the occasion of Sri Ramanavami in Bengaluru on Thursday. SUDHAKARA JAIN

Defence Ministry signs contracts worth ₹5,498 crore with BEL

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Ministry of Defence has signed 10 contracts worth ₹5,498 crore with Bharat Electronics Ltd. (BEL) for the three armed forces.

BEL said the projects for the Indian Air Force include 90 EW Suite Equipment for Medium Lift Helicopter, annual maintenance contract for maintenance of two squadrons of the Akash Missile System. The Army projects include automated Air Defence Control and Reporting System (Project Akashteer) and Instant Fire Detection and Suppressing System (IFDSS) for T72 tanks. The Navy projects include 1265 Software Defined Radios, 1178 HDVLF HF Receivers, 12 Sarang's for Kamov 31 helicopters, INS-SA, CMS for P17 & P28, and Varuna EW system

"These are flagship projects showcasing the indigenous design and manufacturing capabilities of the Indian Defence industry led by BEL, involving other public sectors, private sectors, and MSMEs. The projects will add another milestone to the 'Make in India' initiative of the Government of India," said BEL.

Rains in Bandipur

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

Bandipur and Nagarahole regions received moderate to light showers on Wednesday and Thursday.

Timings
BENGALURU

FRIDAY, MAR. 31
RISE 06:17 SET 18:31
RISE 13:57 SET 02:22

SATURDAY, APR. 01
RISE 06:16 SET 18:31
RISE 14:48 SET 03:07

SUNDAY, APR. 02
RISE 06:15 SET 18:31
RISE 15:37 SET 03:48

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	33	25
Mysuru	36	23
Bengaluru	35	22

Bengaluru Today
34°C Morning will be pleasant with mist and haze. Day will be warm and uneasy. Night also will be pleasant. Spell of rain and thundershower is likely.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
33°C A pleasant morning with mist and haze turns warm day. Night will be pleasant. Chances of rain & thundershower at some places.

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THE HINDU
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Kolar farmers launch online mango delivery portal

Pavana J.
BENGALURU

The website, run by two brothers, is based in Srinivaspura, Kolar district

Kolar Mangoes, in association with the Department of Posts, launched a hassle-free, door-to-door mango delivery service at the Bengaluru General post office on Thursday. The website, run by brothers Chandra Reddy and Bhaskar Reddy, is based in Srinivaspura, Kolar district, one of the highest producers of mango.

"In Srinivaspura, we produce over 1,000-3,000 tonnes of mango in one day during the season," said Chandra Reddy, president of the Kolar District Mango Growers and Marketing Association. Karnataka State Mango Development and Marketing Corporation Ltd. (KSMDMCL) started Karisiri, a door-to-door mango delivery service during the lockdown in 2020, he said. "Over the years, we farmers became more aware of the business. We decided to start our own company," he added.

According to him, the main difference between Karisiri and Kolar Mangoes is that Karisiri only begins operating when there is a high yield. "They wait till they start getting 1,000-2,000 orders per day, but we make deliveries even when we get only 10 orders a day," Mr. Chandra said. Additionally, Mr. Chandra assured customers that Kolar Mangoes would reimburse or replace any boxes of mangoes that were spoiled or damaged.

Mr. Bhaskar said they currently have about six different varieties of fruit such as Alphonso, Banganapalle, Imam Pasand, Senthoora, Kesar, Mallika, and Penish. "We will have about 22 varieties in the coming months," he said. The cost of the mangoes differs based on the variety, at a starting price of ₹150 per kg and each box contains about three kgs.

Kolar Mangoes also source their mangoes from the neighbouring States of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. "The Mango Board wanted to wait for the production of all the farmers to be ready, but we wanted to start early," Mr. Bhaskar said.

Although they officially launched their website only two days ago, they have already received over 10 orders. "There is not much profit unless we start getting bulk orders," Mr. Bhaskar said.

Orders can be placed at www.kolarmangoes.com. The delivery period for each order is about 2-3 days.

There are female wardens in girls' hostels, clarifies SAI

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Responding to allegations of there not being female wardens at the institute, Sports Authority of India (SAI) has said that there are female wardens for the girls' hostel and male wardens for boys' hostel.

The allegations arose after the Jnanabharathi police booked a case against a woman sportsperson for allegedly taking an objectional video of another sportsperson in the bathroom at SAI in Mallathahalli. The police had said that both the women were sportspersons training at SAI. Police said a case had been registered under IPC section 354 and IT Act.

PUBLIC NOTIFICAITON

My client ZIAULLAH SHARIFF,

Here with giving reply to the notice given in paper publication, that **Mrs. ZEENATHUNNISA** has given construction work to my client, at No.27/3, Serpentine Street, Richmond Town, Bangalore – 560 025, Through a construction agreement for **Rs.1,06,70,300/-** accordingly my client had completed the construction work amounting to **Rs.63,53,445/-** out of which she had paid **Rs.34,50,000/-** she is entitled to pay the balance construction amount of **Rs.29,03,445/-** which she did not paid, due to non-payment the construction work has stopped since 15 months, my client made several requests and he was waiting for her reply and payment. To my client's shock she published a paper publication that a contractor cheated her.

Hence my client approached the court of law to bring the truth and to seek justice. My client have filed a case vide O.S No. 1744/2023, which is pending adjudication before the Hon'ble City Civil Court, at, CCH No. 26. Hence this intimation to the general public.

UNIK LAW ASSOCIATES
Mohammed Younus, Advocate
#13, Deverajeevanahalli Main Road, Bangalore-45, Mob: 8310406239

STATE INDUSTRIES PROMOTION CORPORATION OF TAMIL NADU LIMITED
19-A, RUKMANI LAKSHMIPATHY ROAD, EGMORE, CHENNAI-600 008.
CIN U74999TN1971SGC005967

(ONLINE ONLY)

Tender Notice NIT. No. 49/CD/T.No.49/2022-23 **Dt.30.03.2023**

For and on behalf of State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu Limited, tenders are invited under **"Two Cover System"** through online only for the following work from **Class–I** State Level Civil Contractors registered in PWD / Highways / Any Department of Government of Tamil Nadu, Central Government Department, Tamil Nadu State Government Undertaking having experience in similar nature of works. Tenders will be received upto **15.30 Hrs** (as per server system clock) on **04.05.2023** and the same will be opened at **15.30 Hrs** (as per server system clock) on **05.05.2023.**

Name of Work	Approx. value of work	EMD
Construction of RCC Building along with site development works such as Compound wall, UG sump and Street lights for prototyping, testing center Lab, innovation hub in medical device park at SIPCOT Oragadam.	**Rs.2555.00 lakhs** (including GST @18%)	**Rs.12,88,000/-***

* In the form of Demand Draft drawn in favour of **SIPCOT Ltd.,** payable at **Chennai.** (In the Tenderer's Name/Firm only)

The tender Schedule can be Downloaded at free of cost from the website **ww.tntenders.gov.in**

DIPR/1983/TENDER/2023 **MANAGING DIRECTOR**

"சோதனை கடந்து சுதந்திரம் அடைந்தோம், சாதனை புரிந்து சரித்திரம் படைப்போம்."

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby notified that, my client has agreed to purchase the Schedule property from its Owner: **Sri.Sathish Kumar H.A.** S/o Anjinappa, residing at Himarsha Nilaya, Opp: Prestige Ozone, Bangalore – 560 066.

Apart from the said Owner, if any other person/s have any manner of right, title, interest or claim or charge or lien over the Schedule property or otherwise have any lawful objection/s for sale of the Schedule property by the aforesaid Owner, they are hereby called upon to file their objection/s in writing, along with the photocopies of documents on which they rely, with the undersigned, within **10 days** from the date of publication of this notice. Objection/s received thereafter will not be binding on my client.

SCHEDULE

All that piece and parcel of the agricultural lands measuring (i) 4 ¾ Guntas in Sy.No.91/15 (ii) 4 ¾ Guntas in Sy.No.91/16 (iii) 4 ¼ Guntas in Sy.No.91/18 (iv) 2 ½ Guntas in Sy.No.91/20, situated at Bettakote Village, Channarayapatna Hobli, Devanahalli Taluk, Bangalore Rural District and bounded on:

East by : Road;
West by : Property belongs to Dodda Munishamappa;
North by : Property belongs to Janardhan; and
South by : Property belongs to Patel Channarayappa.

Sd/- Goutam Chand S.F
Advocate
Goutam Associates
No.60, 2nd Floor, Kanakapura Road,
Basavanagudi, Bangalore – 560 004

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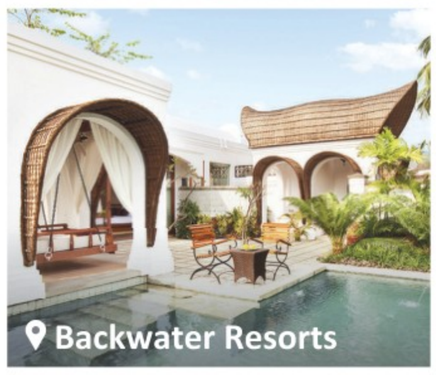

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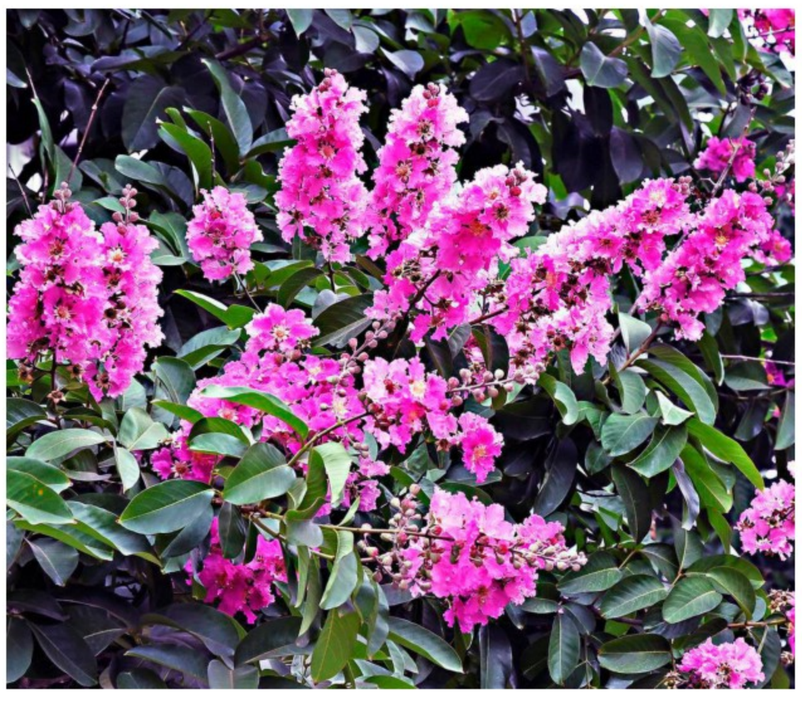
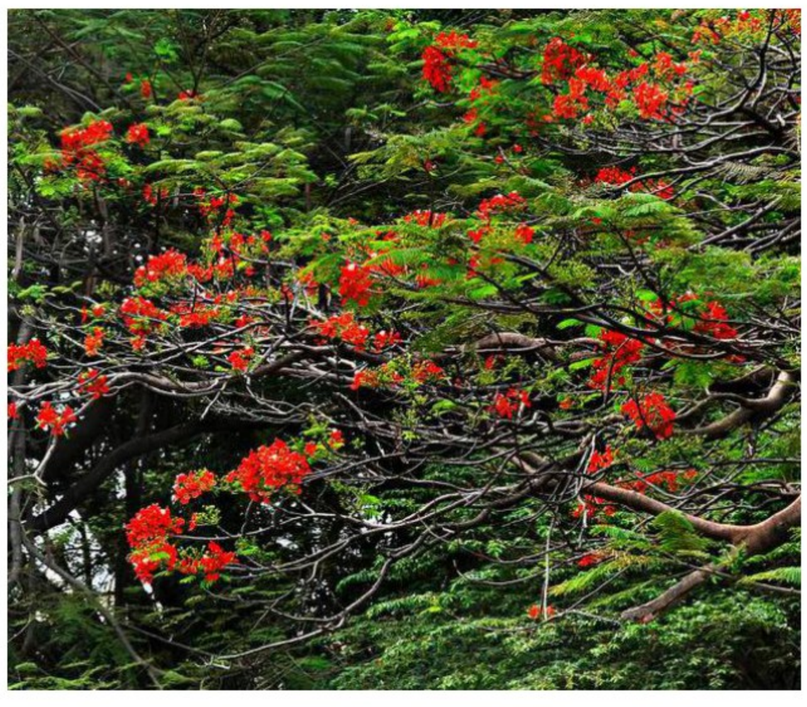




When Bengaluru turns pink, white, yellow, and green

The sight of all the flowering trees fills us with awe, and a sense of peace and joy, all of which are becoming so rare in the stressed and polluted cities today, say ecologists

K.C. Deepika
BENGALURU

It is that time of the year again when Bengaluru emerges from its shadow of being the "IT capital" and traces its roots back to the glorious 'Garden City' tag. Bursts of pink, yellow, and white along what is left of the city's once famed green cover make it "Instagrammable" for reasons beyond its pubs, restaurants and skyscrapers.

Among the flood of social media posts dedicated to the flowering trees is one by a popular digital content creator from the city who, while clicking photos of the luscious flowers, wonders, "Cherry Blossoms? Oh no, that's in Japan," before he goes on to just refer to the pink hues and continue enjoying them.

So where do these picture-perfect trees come from, and how do they add to the character of Bengaluru's landscape?

"Bengaluru has an especially high tree biodiversity compared to many large cities of the world, as our research has shown. Some of the most spectacular flowering trees are the yellow and pink Tabebuias, Jacaranda, rain tree, copper pod, Gulmohar, African tulip, Pride of India, badminton ball tree, sampige, plumeria – but there are so many more, depending on which parts of the city you love to visit," said Harini Nagendra, Professor of Sustainability at Azim Premji University, whose book *Nature in the City: Bengaluru in the Past, Present and Future* documents them.

Native and from outside

Which of these are native to the city? Ms. Nagendra says some commonly found native species are neem, honge, tamarind, jackfruit, mango, peepal, banyan, and coconut, but it depends on what one defines as native.

"For instance, the tamarind, which we consider such an integral part of Indian cooking and biodiversity, is not native to India; it came from central Africa many centuries back, probably brought by Arab traders. Coconut, even more indisputably part of the Bengaluru treescape, is also not native if you dig deep into history. It may have been introduced to the broad Indian Ocean region as far back as two thousand years in the past, first going to Sri Lanka and the Lakshwadeep islands, and then making it to mainland south India," she explained.

Ganesan Rengaian, Senior Fellow, SM Sehgal Foundation Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation, Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), said almost all trees in the city, other than Pongamia, are from other parts of the world or India.

"Trees such as Tabebuia, Jacaranda, Sapthodea campanulata, Kigelia Africana, Couroupita guianensis (Cannonball tree), Millingtonia hortensis (agasha malligae) are from outside India. Most of the plants in Lalbagh are from other parts of the world. The silk cotton tree (Ceiba pentandra), the grandiose individual from Lalbagh, is also from South America. But we have red silk cotton tree (Bombax ceiba) from the Western Ghats." Mimusops elengi, Madhuca longifolia (ippae mara, Mahua), Pongamia pinnata, Filicium decipens, Calophyllum inophyllum, mangoes, jackfruit tree, Melia dubia, Holoptelea integrifolia, etc could have been part of the jungle of the erstwhile Bangalore, he said.

Varieties brought by rulers

Ms. Nagendra said the foreign varieties were brought in by various rulers and administrators. "Tipu brought the eucalyptus, for instance. British and German horticulturalists – like James Cameron, superintendent of Government Gardens in the late 19th century, or Gustav Krumbiegel, who took charge of horticulture in Bengaluru and planted trees across Lalbagh and many parts of the city, imported trees from colonial territories, botanical gardens and sites of botanical exploration across the world."

> The trees from outside India were largely introduced during the European colonisation just to make the landscape 'colourful'. These trees landed in Indian gardens such as Lalbagh as part of the acclimatisation of non-Indian plants to be introduced into the Nilgiris, Dehradun, etc. Before they moved to Nilgiris, Chennai, Mumbai, or Delhi, they landed at Bengaluru or Kolkata Botanical Gardens.
>
> **GANESAN RENGAIAN**
> Senior Fellow, ATREE

Mr. Rengaian added that, similar to human migration, plants also have been moved around the world for different purposes. "The trees from outside India were largely introduced during the European colonisation just to make the landscape 'colourful'. The streets, gardens, and parks are part of the 'civilization' which accommodated the trees, and we consider them exotics today. Largely, these trees landed in Indian gardens such as Lalbagh as part of the acclimatisation of non-Indian plants to be introduced into the Nilgiris, Dehradun, etc. Before they moved to Nilgiris, Chennai, Mumbai, or Delhi, they landed at Bengaluru or Kolkata Botanical Gardens," he explained.

"Today, many horticultural industries bring in exotics by flouting the quarantine regulations or not minding that one day, they will become invasive exotics. Some of our public institutions also boast that as part of gardening efforts, they bring in many endangered species from other parts of the world," he said.

How good are they for ecosystem

Does this mean that this celebrated variety is bad for our ecosystem? Yes and no, said Mr. Rengaian. "In fact, the whole of Bengaluru is a human-modified landscape, and little space is left for indigenous plants. Overall, we should give space for plants – indigenous or exotic – so that the animals will follow them appropriately. The animal guild at present in Bengaluru or any other city of India is more generalist and adapted to the urban landscape, and we cannot still hold on to indigenous plants. The lifestyle of humans today cannot accommodate more of indigenous plants and animals because of homogenisation or globalization of our culture," he pointed out.

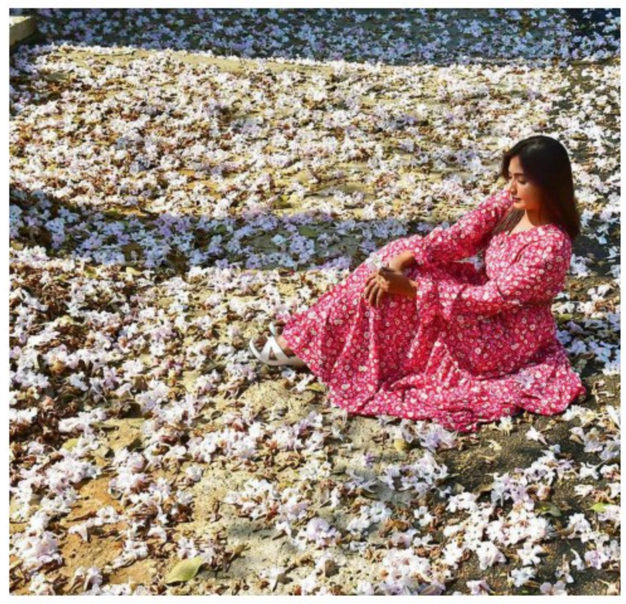
Ms. Nagendra, too, said that they have now naturalised, having been in Bengaluru for close to two centuries - local fauna also uses them, pollinates them, and inhabits them. I don't think we should have a wholesale ban on 'foreign' species. That would be disastrous.

Need for protection

Going forward, in terms of planting in urban spaces, she said we need to protect our heritage trees, first and foremost. Then, we need a widespread, aggressive tree planting plan for the entire city which aims to plant millions of trees in public places - not in lakes, wetlands or grasslands, which have their own special ecology, but on roads, in parks, school and college grounds, office campuses and malls, and all other locations we can think of. "The city is going to face repeated climate stress in the form of heat waves, air pollution, floods and droughts, and having more trees will make the microclimate more bearable and liveable. The sight of all these gorgeous flowering trees fills us with awe, beauty and a sense of peace and joy, all of which are becoming so rare in stressed, polluted cities today," she pointed out.

Not only trees, but we should also have herbs and shrubs, added Mr. Rengaian. "We should change our attitude to provide space for plants too. Plants are magnets, and animals will follow them. We should introduce the younger generation to these plants and animals rather than live in our nostalgia. We should change our mindset that plants are no more our servants, rather treat them as co-inhabitants of urban space," he urged.

"Above all, we need to plan ahead. We are cutting down hundreds of thousands of trees at an ever-growing pace. This is reckless and will come back to haunt us," warned Ms. Nagendra, echoing the concern of several citizens and environmentalists.



Bengaluru is a sight to behold, as the city blooms with the vibrant hues of many flowers providing a picture-perfect setting. BHAGYA PRAKASH K., K. MURALI KUMAR

It's time for metal again

Metal is back on the map, courtesy the resilience of fans and festival founder Salman U Syed

Anurag Tagat

One of the misfortunes that befell metalheads in India was the postponement of Bangalore Open Air, the country's only music festival for heavy music, back in March 2020. With the uncertainty of the pandemic looming large, it's only now, three years later, that festival founder Salman U Syed has been able to plan a comeback worthy of its ninth edition.

Taking place on April 1, the lineup includes legendary Norwegian black metal band Mayhem, American modern metal act Born Of Osiris and Dutch death metal veterans Pestilence, all making their India debut.

Among the Indian acts on the lineup are city-based stalwarts Kryptos and Dying Embrace (who will be bowing out of live performances, making this their last stage appearance). Hyderabad/Bengaluru thrash/death band Godless and Kerala-origin thrash metal trio Amorphia complete the lineup. Abbas Razvi, the bassist for Godless, says, "It's the one event that all of India's metal fans look forward to."

Even accounting for ticketholders keeping their passes from 2020 (and told that it would be honoured), it was a surprise for Syed that Bangalore Open Air officially sold out tickets this year.

The founder says, "What we're grateful for is that people held on to tickets. The spirit of the festival was kept alive through those fans. I have a certain capacity and can't hold more people. We'll probably sell about a 100 production holding tickets on the day of the event. I never expected so many people to turn up for metal, to be honest."

It's been the longest that fans and organisers have had to wait to put metal back on the map in a big way, considering Bangalore Open Air has seen its years of struggle as well to sustain. The timeline is such that from March 2020, the event was postponed to June 2020, in the hopes back then that the pandemic would subside.

Syed exasperatedly still notes, "Who knew the pandemic would last more than two years?" After a lot of instability for live music, they had originally set a date for December 2021, which Bangalore Open Air was unable to honor due to unavailability of international headliners.

Names like Kryptos are familiar on the Bangalore Open Air lineup, but it's only the second time Godless are back on the big stage. In fact, they performed at the previous festival edition in 2019 as well and Razvi counts it as one of their top three gigs of all time.

Now, they will present their debut album, *States Of Chaos*, from 2021 and Razvi says the band will record their performance with a multi-camera setup to release later. "We're going to play a lot of new material and we have a second guitarist (Siddhartha Ramanathan) specifically for the show," Razvi adds.

Bangalore Open Air 2023 takes place on April 1, from 1.30pm onwards at Royal Orchid Resort & Convention Centre. Limited tickets will be available at the gate.

Clamour and chaos A previous edition of Bangalore Open Air (above), the Mayhem band. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Tughlaq on stage

Director S Surendranath says the concept of the play will always be relevant

Shilpa Anandraj
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S Surendranath is known to always swim against the tide. He is one of those theatre personalities who has not given up on the stage and you will always find him directing or writing plays or helming interesting theatre projects for children and adults alike. The director, who also writes for films, will present Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq*, which is also directed by him. The play, in Kannada, will be staged by Bhoomija.

Ask why *Tughlaq*, as the play has been staged so many times and he responds with: "Why not? Theatre should live today. It cannot be set in the past and so *Tughlaq*, which was written years ago by Girish Karnad, will have some of my perspectives and my direction too. The play has been built around my experiences with a few changes, not in its concept or dialogues, but rather a presence of my perspective."

Keeping the fire burning Theatre comes first for Surendranath.

Surendranath adds: "*Tughlaq* is one of the greatest plays in Indian theatre. It revolves around an eccentric ruler in Indian history and the events of that time; it can never be irrelevant. The conflict between politics and religion has always been there."

"This directorial is an attempt to present its concept in contemporary times, both inwardly and externally. Inwardly by examining Tughlaq's personal turmoil, and his relationships, externally by bringing up contemporary events. It is an attempt to see Tughlaq as a common man rather than a king, thereby understanding the present in both general and political contexts."

The production is designed by MS Sathyu and features actors from theatre, TV and the film industry. The play is being staged as part of Bhoomija's 10th anniversary celebrations. *Venue is Ranga Shankara, April 4 and 6, 7.30pm. Tickets, priced at ₹250, will be available at Ranga Shankara and BookMyShow.*

Month of melodies

Both Sree Ramaseva Mandali and Sree Seshadripuram Ramaseva Samithi celebrate milestones this year, bringing joy to music lovers

Star studded Vocalists S Soumya (left) and Sudha Raghunathan are two of the artistes participating in the Ramanavami concerts. R RAGU

Ranjani Govind

No Sri Ramanavami is complete without melody in Karnataka with nearly four-dozen mandalis and samithis coming together for pooja and a discourse, followed by music. The tradition was followed even during the pandemic years, in a virtual avatar. "Nothing can defeat the human spirit," says SN Varadaraj, General Secretary of the Sree Ramaseva Mandali in Chamarajpet.

The Mandali's music schedule offers 64 concerts presented by 260 senior and junior artistes. Varadaraj and his son, Abhijith, have been meticulous in their selection of artistes to commemorate the Mandali's 85th year.

"Harish Sivaramakrishnan of the rock band, Agam, will present a full-fledged classical session with Ambika Prasad on the violin, Rajesh Nath on the mridangam and BR Ravikumar on the ghatam," says Abhijith.

Not to forget the Siraha trio of U Rajesh (mandolin), Sivamani (drums) and Harmeet (keyboard) for a Carnatic fusion," he adds.

(Tickets @ Fort High School Grounds. Call 9448079079 / 9483518012 or log on to www.ramanavamitickets.com)

As free as the air for 75 years

Excitement grips members of the Sree Seshadripuram Ramaseva Samithi as it steps into its Platinum Jubilee Year of Ramanavami Music Fest, from March 30 to April 27.

"There is a sense of nostalgia as we remember fests held at the Ramadevara Devasthana and Seshadripuram College. The who's who of classical music performed at the Samithi," says Sarita S Rao of the Ramaseva Samithi.

Committee secretary Ramakrishnan recalls how founding members knocked on doors to collect funds for the Samithi. "To have a Ramanavami banner in the heart of Bengaluru was their dream," says Ramakrishnan.

"There will be 29 concerts at the Seshadripuram College premises," says Samithi treasurer Revathi Tarakaram. The USP of the Samithi has been its free concerts and this year leading musicians such as Dhananjay Hegde and Malladi Brothers share the stage with youngsters such as Nisha Rajagopalan, Vignesh Eshwar and others.

(All concerts are at Seshadripuram College premises from 6.30pm)

Onlookers anonymous Invasion of Privacy (right) by artist Soura Chatterjee (below). SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Chronicles in paint and print

Nahi Manzoor, an ongoing exhibition by Soura Chatterjee, captures the ironies and complexities of life in India

Ruth Dhanaraj
ruth.dhanaraj@thehindu.co.in

Ever wondered how peeping Toms are creepy voyeurs while Big Brother is a not-so-benign snoopy? In *Nahi Manzoor*, Bengaluru-based artist Soura Chatterjee depicts scenes from daily life and commonplace problems that barely cause a ripple, only because we have normalised them.

"I depict everyday activities because as an artist I feel it is my duty to society, just as a doctor, lawyer or policeman have their obligation to the community. As artists, we chronicle the times we live in as a record or reference for the future," says Soura.

"We may not be here 500 years from now, but if our art survives, it would give future generations an idea of our lives."

While Soura admits the depictions depend upon individual perspectives, he believes artists "not only do this for themselves but also for people who do not have the language to share the problems they face on a daily basis."

In a way, he is also spying on their lives, agrees Soura.

Born in West Bengal, Soura unabashedly admits to having been influenced by the philosophy of the Communist Party, which has been a part of the fabric of his native State.

"I consider myself a 'people's artist'."

"In all my work, you will see a linear equalisation of some aspect of society – issues of gender, caste, levels of economy," he says.

He goes on to talk about one of his works in the show titled An Independence Day where a man is asleep at the foot of a mast with the tricolour while vultures circle overhead.

"It's shameful that even after 75 years of independence, people are left to sleep on the roads. The vultures are those whose only interest is to profit as much as possible. In Threat to Privacy, the tiger is symbolic of those who encroach on one's private space via surveillance."

"I use symbols that people can easily understand because, at the end of the day, if they do not understand my work then it is pointless."

Angular, sharply edged, the stark contrast of planes and shadow bifurcate colour in Soura's work. Everyday scenes and familiar objects are his inspiration.

As many as 25 of his works are a part of *Nahi Manzoor* and will be on show at Gallery Time and Space till April 4, 2023.

STEPOUT

Get booked!
Bhumika Anand launches the book, *BWW Bangalore Anthology,* written by Yogesh Kannan Mariappan, Ashish A, Sushma Madappa, and Avishek Chakrobarty. It has been published by Atta Galatta. The event is part of BWW's (Bangalore Writers' Workshop) completing 10 years.
On April 1, 5pm at Atta Galatta, Ist Stage Indiranagar.

Turning two
ARAKU Café, Indiranagar, turns two. To celebrate, they have launched a chef's special menu with "experimental flavours" such as chicken and cream with repurposed croissant spice crumble and mustard oil and chocolate cake to name a few.
Contact 7993989888.

Ramayana through dance
Bharatanatyam dancer Raksha Karthik from the Natanam School of Dance, presents *Thyagaraaja Ramayana,* as part of their Ramanavami celebrations.
On April 2 at Nayana Auditorium-Kannada Bhavana, 6pm.

INBRIEF

BJP files three complaints with Election Commission

The ruling BJP petitioned the Election Commission of India for the second consecutive day on Thursday. A delegation of the party filed a complaint against the former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Congress leader, for allegedly giving ₹1,000 to the music artists during his poll campaign at Bilaguli village in Varuna constituency on Wednesday after the declaration of elections.

In its second complaint, the BJP accused Mr. Siddaramaiah of trying to affect the credibility of the election commission by remarking that "the commission has deployed more number of IT officers only to neutralise the Congress."

The party also filed another complaint against AICC general secretary Randeep Surjewala for describing the BJP government in a tweet as "the BJP's 40 per cent commission government that has brazenly looted the state".

Four-time MLA S.R. Srinivas of Gubbi joins Congress

S.R. Srinivas, four-time MLA from Gubbi constituency in Tumakuru district, on Thursday, joined the Congress in the presence of KPCC president D.K. Shivakumar and Leader of the Opposition Siddaramaiah.

Mr. Srinivas, who was elected to the 15th Legislative Assembly on the JD(S) ticket, resigned from the membership of the Legislative Assembly on March 27. He is likely to get the Congress ticket to contest the Assembly elections from the Gubbi. Along with Mr. Srinivas, a large number of his supporters from the Gubbi constituency also joined the Congress.

Voter inducement: Complaint against former councillor

Byatarayanapura MLA Krishna Byre Gowda on Thursday complained to the Election Commission demanding legal action against the former BJP councillor K. Munendra Kumar (who represented Jakkur ward) for allegedly storing household appliances and other goods. The appliances were found embossed with images of the BBMP, the BJP symbol, and the former councillor himself, the MLA said.

Alleging that the items were stored with the intention to bribe voters during the Assembly elections, Mr. Gowda said two cases had been registered in this regard.

"In the first case, the tax authorities seized a range of items from three godowns located at Vidyashilp Academy, Jakkur, and Yelahanka. In the second case, revenue officers seized 450 helmets, 35 cricket kits, 50 blanket pieces, and 200 cloth handbags from a room in Hayagriva Public School, Srinivasapura village, Byatarayanapura Assembly constituency. While action has been initiated against the management of the school, Mr. Kumar has not been arraigned as an accused in the crime," stated the complaint addressed to the Chief Electoral Officer for Karnataka.

State notifies 10% EWS quota on the eve of announcement of poll schedule

This comes days after 2B Category for Muslims under OBC quota was scrapped; six communities, including Muslims, now come under EWS

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Days after scrapping the 2B Category for Muslims under the OBC quota and on the eve of the announcement of the Assembly elections, the Karnataka government notified the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) category to provide 10% reservation in education and employment. Muslims are included under this category as per the Cabinet decision taken last week.

The order issued on March 28, the day before the model code of conduct came into force, stated that those castes that do not enjoy reservation status provided to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and are not in the list of backward classes and communities transferred to the EWS reservation from the backward classes will be eligible for 10% reservation. The five communities of Brahmins, Arya Vysyas, Mudaliars, Jains, and Nagarathas have been identified to benefit from the EWS reservation in Karnataka. Muslims are the new addition to the category now.

The State government issued the order notifying 10% reservation for Economically Weaker Sections on March 28. FILE PHOTO

Justifying the scrapping of 4% reservation to Muslims under the 2B Category of OBC quota, the order stated that at the time the 2B Category was created and members of the Muslim community were included/classified as backward classes for the purpose of reservation, there was neither any recommendation by anybody nor was there any empirical data. Members of the Muslim community have adequate protection under the Constitution for the establishment of minority institutions and admission of minority students. It also pointed out at the Andhra Pradesh High Court has held the Andhra Pradesh reservation in favour of the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes of Muslims Act, 2007, unsustainable. The case is pending before the Supreme Court, it noted.

The order said that a committee headed the Chief Secretary that reviewed beneficiaries for the EWS had identified five communities in the State eligible for EWS reservation, and the Venkataswamy commission had submitted a report to the government in 1986 in this regard. The population of these five communities account for about 6.05% in the State.

OBC reclassification spelt out

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The government has notified the reclassified reservation categories under backward classes that has 32% quota in total.

Instead of three classes classified under most, more, and backward classes categories, the government has stuck to two categories – most backward and more backward. Communities listed in Category 1 (4%) and 2A (15 %) continue to be in the most backward category.

More backward

The newly created categories of 2C with 6% and 2D with 7% for Vokkaligas and Veerashaiva-Lingayats, respectively, along with other communities, have been termed as more backward. As per the order, Vokkaligas, Kodavas, and Balija in Category 3A have been moved to 2C and Veerashaiva-Lingayat sub-castes, Maratha, Christians, Bunts, Jains (Digambara), and Satani in 3B have been moved to 2D. The categories of 2B, 3A and 3B do not exist any more.

Ordinance route to increase ceiling for tender works for SC/ST contractors

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Just before the model code of conduct for the Assembly elections kicked in on Wednesday, the State government promulgated an Ordinance to increase the ceiling for tender works from ₹50 lakh to ₹1 crore for SC/ST contractors.

N. Mahadevaswamy, president, Karnataka SC/ST Contractors' Association, welcomed the government decision and said it would benefit a large number of contractors.

Association demand

For the past couple of years, the association has been demanding the government to increase the ceiling for tender works from ₹50 lakh to ₹1 crore for SC/ST contractors. Back in 2016, the Congress government had introduced reservation in public tender works. A total of 24.1% of the public works under ₹50 lakh would be reserved for SC/ST contractors.

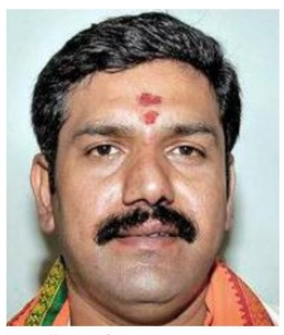
The government recently increased the quantum of reservation to SC communities from 15% to 17% and for STs from 3% to 7%. It also introduced internal reservation for various sections of Scheduled Castes under four categories.

Will Vijayendra be fielded from Varuna against Siddaramaiah or will he opt for a 'safe' launch?

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Even as speculation is rife that the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) may field B.Y. Vijayendra in Varuna against Leader of the Opposition Siddaramaiah, sources in the party said his father and former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa is lobbying hard to veto this idea seeking a "safe launch" for his son from his seat, Shikaripur.

In fact, when asked by media persons on Thursday whether the party will field Mr. Vijayendra in Varuna, Mr. Yediyurappa said "discussions were on and the party high command will take the final decision". Without taking his son's name, he only said it was difficult for Mr. Siddaramaiah to win this time and that the party would field a "suitable candidate" against him and give a tough fight.



B.Y. Vijayendra

Lingayat presence

It can be recalled that Mr. Vijayendra wanted to contest from Varuna in 2018 against Mr. Siddaramaiah's son Yathindra, but the faction opposed to Mr. Yediyurappa lobbied hard to deny him the ticket at the last minute. Given that Varuna has a significant Veerashaiva-Lingayat population and houses Suttur Mutt revered by the community, the BJP has come second with a good performance in the constituency since 2008.

Karnataka Votes 2023

Even from the Karnataka Janata Party, in 2013, Kapu Siddalingaswamy had secured 54,744 votes against Mr. Siddaramaiah. However, the Ahinda vote bank in the constituency is almost double the size of the Lingayat vote base, sources said.

Changed scenario

However, in a changed scenario with Mr. Siddaramaiah himself contesting from Varuna, the same faction is now pitching hard for Mr. Vijayendra's candidature from the constituency, multiple sources in the party said. "Multiple surveys by the Congress and the BJP have indicated that it is tough to defeat Mr. Siddaramaiah this time. This is a conspiracy to nip Mr. Vijayendra's career in the bud and we are countering it hard," a close associate of Mr. Yediyurappa claimed.

This proposal has been the bone of contention between Mr. Yediyurappa and the camp opposed to him for some time now, prompting him to unilaterally announce that his son will take his place in Shikaripur, as early as July 2022.

"The father and son are very clear that the safe bet for Mr. Vijayendra will be Shikaripur. In fact, he has planned to begin his work in Shikaripur on Monday. Mr. Yediyurappa enjoys a good rapport with both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah and is a member of the BJP parliamentary board and the central election committee which decides on the ticket, and this time his voice will be heard and cannot be discarded," one of his close associates said.

'Giant killer' tag

"But the Modi-Shah combine is known to spring surprises and if they indeed insist that Mr. Vijayendra contest from Varuna, he will. He will emerge as a 'giant killer' if he defeats Mr. Siddaramaiah. It will be a credit to him even if he gives a tough fight and is defeated," he added.

Sources said the former Chief Minister may seek a guarantee of his son's political rehabilitation if he is defeated.

Call on selection of candidates will be taken by central leadership: BSY

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

As the countdown for the Karnataka Assembly elections has begun, BJP veteran leader B.S. Yediyurappa on Thursday made it clear that the selection of candidates would be made solely by the party's central leadership.

"Union Home Minister Amit Shah will come here again to look into the issue. We can only provide suggestions, but the final decision would be taken by the central leadership," Mr. Yediyurappa said at a press conference in Bengaluru.

Senior BJP leader B.S. Yediyurappa, flanked by Union Ministers of State Shobha Karandlaje and Bhagwanth Khuba, at a press meet in Bengaluru on Thursday.

Winnability key

Replying to queries on some of the veteran leaders seeking the ticket for their family members as they are growing old, Mr. Yediyurappa said the central leadership would take a final call on all such issues. However, he hinted that winning ability could be the main criterion for the selection of candidates by saying that the candidates who have a "wave in their favour" would be chosen.

When asked if there is any proposal by the central leadership to impose one-family, one-ticket rule, Mr. Yediyurappa, whose two sons are in active politics, said, "We will strictly abide by whatever decision to be taken by the party central leadership." Mr. Yediyurappa said soon he would undertake a tour of all the Assembly constituencies in the State along with other leaders. He also said that the BJP MPs from the State, including Rajya Sabha members, had been instructed by Mr. Shah to stay put in their constituencies and do poll work.

Seeking to downplay a recent pre-poll survey that had predicted that the Congress will get the majority, Mr. Yediyurappa said the three surveys done by the BJP had clearly indicated that the party would win about 130 seats. "I am in politics for 50 years and know the pulse of people," he said. "These elections would see people backing the BJP like they did during the previous Lok Sabha polls when the party won 25 of the 28 seats."

High Court declares as void election of JD(S) MLA Gowrishankar from Tumakuru Rural constituency

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka on Thursday declared as void the election of Janata Dal (Secular) MLA D.C Gowrishankar from the Tumakuru Rural constituency in May 2018.

The court found him guilty of corrupt practice by distributing Medi Assist health insurance cards through his agents by offering insurance coverage to several schoolchildren to entice votes from parents of such children, who were studying in the schools coming under the Tumakuru Rural constituency.

Justice S. Sunil Dutt Yadav passed the order while partly allowing an election petition filed by defeated BJP candidate B. Suresh Gowda way back in June 2018. The court, however, refused to declare Mr. Gowda as the elected candidate.

Operation stayed

Meanwhile, the court stayed the implementation of the order for 30 days to enable Mr. Gowrishankar to file an appeal before the Supreme Court.

The stay was granted by accepting the contention made on behalf of Mr. Gowrishankar that the judgment would impact him for filling his nomination paper for the upcoming Assembly elections.

It was argued on his behalf that the process of filling nomination papers for the elections would expire before the period provided in the law to file an appeal before the apex court challenging the judgment of the High Court and seek an interim order of stay from the apex court.

Corrupt practice

The court found that Kammagondanahalli Sri Maruthi Seva Samithi (KMSS), managed and run by the family members of Mr. Gowrishankar, had purchased Medi Assist policy in February 2018. And the insurance cards were distributed through his election agents during the door-to-door campaign after he filed nomination papers as an official candidate of the JD(S) in April 2018.

The very act of handing over the Medi Assist cards, which could be invoked to claim reimbursement of medical expenses, could be construed to be a gift/offer with the object of directly or indirectly inducing the elector to vote; or could be construed to be a gratification to induce the elector to vote, and hence amounts to 'bribery' under Section 123 of the R.P. Act, the court said.

On the conduct of KMSS, the court said, "It can be stated that the KMSS has been an accessory and played a part in the entirety of the design of commission of corrupt practice.

The timing of taking of the policy and distribution of Medi Assist cards through other persons would all point to action being taken by the KMSS to help Mr. Gowrishankar, who is a family member though he was not a member of the KMSS, the court said while analysing the pieces of evidence.

M.K.Stalin

Stalin to hold talks virtually with political parties soon

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) president and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, who had earlier launched the All India Federation of Social Justice, will be organising a webinar next week to hold discussion with leaders of like-minded political parties and associations in the country.

The topic of the meeting to be held on April 3 is 'Taking forward the struggle for Social Justice Movement.'

"We have invited leaders at the national level, who share our views on social justice and other associations. But it is not yet clear about who are all going to participate in the meeting," said a senior DMK leader.

CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury has agreed to participate in the meeting. Former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akilesh Yadav, Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar Tejaswi Yadav, and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee are among the leaders who have been invited.

Kharge blames BJP for Rahul's LS exit

He inaugurates centenary celebrations of Vaikom Satyagraha in Kerala; says it paved the way for establishing the rights and dignity of people

The Hindu Bureau
VAIKOM

AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge on his arrival to inaugurate the Vaikom Satyagraha centenary. THULASI KAKKAT

The disqualification of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi from the Lok Sabha is a dark moment in the history of democracy in the country. The events leading up to the disqualification have been manipulated by the BJP. However, it will be fought at the appropriate forum, said Mallikarjun Kharge, president of All India Congress Committee, on Thursday.

Mr. Kharge inaugurated the year-long centenary celebrations of the Vaikom Satyagraha organised by the Congress at Vaikom in Kerala's Kottayam on Thursday. The success of the Vaikom Satyagraha paved the way for establishing the rights, honour and dignity of all groups of people in society, he said.

Mr. Kharge said the RSS had nothing to do with fighting for the rights of the downtrodden in the Vaikom Satyagraha. It was the Congress that took up the cause of the people who were not even allowed to use the roads surrounding the Vaikom temple. Mr. Kharge said he was proud to be part of the celebrations and recalled that it was at the Belgaum session of the Congress that an elaborate resolution was passed to launch action against the restrictions on people imposed by the Vaikom temple authorities.

T.N. plans events to remember Vaikom

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin announced in the Assembly on Thursday that his government was planning year-long events to commemorate the Vaikom Satyagraha that was launched to end caste discrimination in a local temple a century ago.

Making a *suo motu* statement, Mr. Stalin said Vaikom Award would be given to eminent personalities or organisations that worked for the welfare of oppressed sections beyond the State borders. It would be awarded on Periyar E.V. Ramasamy's birth anniversary on September 17, which is also being observed as Day of Social Justice by Tamil Nadu.

Periyar was among the leaders who took part in the movement and went on to earn the title 'Vaikom Veerar'. The government would take steps towards issuing a commemorative stamp to mark the centenary of the satyagraha.

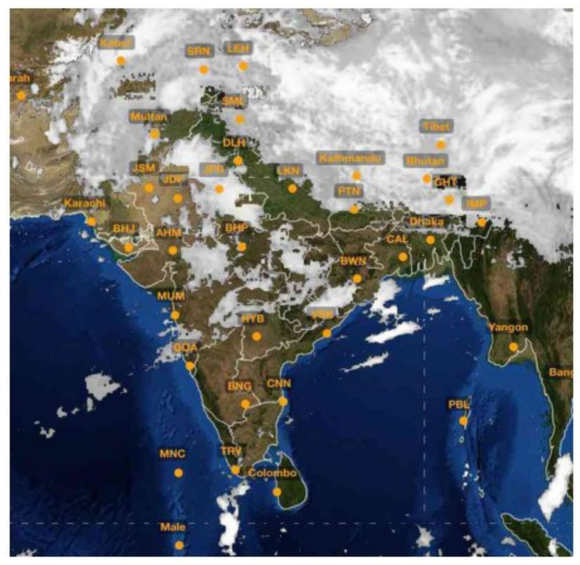
Memorial for Periyar

On November 29, 2023 a grand event would be held by the Tamil Nadu government. Mr. Stalin, his Kerala counterpart Pinarayi Vijayan and several personalities would take part in it. The memorial for Periyar at Vaikom in Kerala would be renovated at a cost of ₹8.14 crore and efforts would be taken to set up a memorial at Aruvikutti, where Periyar was held in jail for the first time.

Researcher Pazha Adhiyaman's book *Vaikom Protest* in Tamil would be translated into Malayalam. It would also be published in Telugu, Kannada and English. A book on the movement would be published by the Tamil Nadu Textbook and Educational Services Corporation.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Friday: Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Jammu & kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, Muzaffarabad, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Assam, Meghalaya, Sikkim, sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Odisha

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	32.7	20.0	Kozhikode	—	35.5	27.4
Ahmedabad	—	35.1	24.7	Kurnool	—	40.1	26.8
Aizawl	6	25.0	13.0	Lucknow	—	35.7	19.7
Allahabad	—	37.6	20.6	Madurai	—	37.7	25.4
Bengaluru	—	33.8	23.1	Mangaluru	—	32.8	23.8
Bhopal	—	—	19.6	Mumbai	—	31.3	23.0
Bhubaneswar	—	35.0	24.7	Mysuru	28.5	35.0	20.4
Chandigarh	—	32.4	17.9	New Delhi	9	33.4	17.8
Chennai	—	33.1	26.5	Patna	—	37.2	20.3
Coimbatore	—	36.4	24.0	Port Blair	—	32.5	25.6
Dehradun	—	32.2	15.0	Puducherry	—	34.4	24.2
Gangtok	4	16.2	10.5	Pune	—	33.5	17.1
Goa	—	33.0	21.0	Raipur	—	37.6	25.0
Guwahati	1	30.9	18.6	Ranchi	—	33.4	20.4
Hubballi	—	37.0	18.0	Shillong	—	22.0	11.5
Hyderabad	—	37.4	24.7	Shimla	—	19.4	8.8
Imphal	—	28.7	14.5	Srinagar	0.4	19.3	6.6
Jaipur	—	32.8	22.1	Thiruvananthapuram	—	35.0	26.5
Kochi	—	32.0	26.2	Tiruchi	—	37.1	25.6
Kohima	—	21.0	12.0	Vijayawada	—	35.2	25.2
Kolkata	—	35.3	25.8	Visakhapatnam	—	31.8	26.4

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	6	46	32	112	116	
Bengaluru	7	17	53	62	88	
Chennai	96	28	23	23	54	
Delhi	18	100	119	222	244	
Hyderabad	15	3	69	68	111	
Kolkata	9	10	31	44	60	
Lucknow	29	31	37	218	137	
Mumbai	10	120	61	201	154	
Pune	118	173	113	88	77	
Visakhapatnam	19	39	15	51	85	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Samastipur, Bihar recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 335 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Mandikhera, Haryana recorded a healthy AQI score of 30

Air Quality Code: Poor | Moderate | Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

With FSSAI's new order, *dahi* goes, curd returns

Sharath S. Srivatsa
BENGALURU

After an uproar over the insistence on displaying the word *dahi* prominently on the curd packets marketed by milk federations in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on Thursday withdrew the order.

In fresh changes to the labelling provisions, the FSSAI has recommended the display of "curd" prominently and its equivalent in the regional languages in brackets.

Following the order, the milk federations can use *mosaru*, *thayir*, *perugu*, *zaamt daud* or *dahi* in brackets.

The Hindu, in its Wednesday's edition, had highlighted the challenges before the Karnataka Milk Federation to display *dahi* prominently after several Kannada groups opposed the FSSAI order. In the same letter, the Joint Director (Science and Standards) had asked the Tamil Nadu Cooperative Milk Producers Federation Ltd., Aavin, to use *dahi* since the prominent display of curd had been dropped earlier.

Labelling standards

The FSSAI had notified provisions for omission of the term curd from the Standards of Fermented Milk Products through a January 11, 2023 notification.

The labelling standards came under the Food Safety and Standards (Food Products Standards and Food Additives) Regulations, 2011 and the milk federations in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala had been asked to use *dahi*, which had been opposed.

Following this, the FSSAI had issued a clarification asking the federations to use words in the regional languages in brackets along with *dahi*.

Thursday's order by the FSSAI to use curd in the labelling came after severe criticism from prominent political leaders, including Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, former Karnataka Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy and Bharatiya Janata Party Tamil Nadu president Annamalai, among others.

Besides, linguistic groups had also raised concern over the use of *dahi* prominently as it was seen as an effort to impose Hindi among the non-Hindi speaking population in Southern States.

INBRIEF

Pandal, dwaja sthambam destroyed in A.P. temple fire

A pandal and the outer portion of *dwaja sthambam* (pillar) of Lord Venugopala Swamy temple were destroyed in a fire during Sriramanavami celebrations at Duvva village in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh on Thursday. The pandal was erected with palm leaves. The pandal caught fire after a firecracker fell on it. The entire pandal was destroyed and the outer portion of the pillar was also burnt in the incident. No casualty has been reported.

Kerala seeks nod to operate chartered flights in Gulf

The Kerala government has requested the Centre to accord expeditious approval for additional or chartered flights in the international sector from the second week of April. In a letter addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday also sought the intervention of the Centre to stop airline companies operating in the India-Gulf sector from fleecing passengers during peak-demand occasions such as festivals and school vacation. The State is keen on operating chartered flights at reasonable rates for the benefit of low-income emigrants in Gulf countries this festive season.

PM to launch MMTS Phase-2 services on April 8

The much awaited MMTS-Phase Two of suburban train services of the South Central Railway (SCR) is finally likely to see the light of the day as it is set to be green flagged by Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he is tentatively scheduled to arrive in Secunderabad station for the launch of the second Vande Bharat express towards temple town of Tirupathi on April 8. The Prime Minister will also be laying the foundation stone for the Secunderabad station modernisation and launch the Secunderabad-Mahabubnagar doubling-electrification line.

Not in demand

As the Model Code of Conduct kicked in for the Karnataka elections, most of the unfinished development work has come to a standstill. The demand for statues has also come down. An artist has covered the statues as they have no takers for some time now. BHAGYA PRAKASH K.

Mission Arikompan: hartal near-total in 10 Idukki panchayats

The Hindu Bureau
IDUKKI

A dawn-to-dusk hartal called by a joint action council formed to demand the capture of wild tusker Arikompan was near-total in 10 gram panchayats in Idukki district on Thursday. Normal life faced disruption in parts of the district, buses and taxis kept off the road and tourist destinations at Chinnakkanal and Anayirankal wore a deserted look on the day.

The council called the 12-hour hartal to call attention to the man-elephant issues affecting chiefly 13 panchayats in Idukki. However, three other panchayats – Rajakkad, Senapathi and Bison Valley – were exempted from the stir to allow school students to take their examinations.

Road blockades

The protesters staged road blockades from Thursday morning. They blocked traffic on the Bodimettu inter-State highway and the Sinkukandam-Bodimettu route.

Tourists from Munnar and Thekkady were stranded in many places.

The protesters, including women, said they will continue the stir till the Forest department captured Arikompan. The hartal was called also in protest against the Kerala High Court order not to capture the wild tusker.

Six injured as YSRCP and TDP cadres clash

The Hindu Bureau
DHONE (NANDYAL DIST.)

Six persons, including three police personnel, were injured at Mallampalli village in Dhone mandal of Nandyal district on Thursday when two groups belonging to YSR Congress Party and Telugu Desam Party clashed with sticks and stones reportedly over financial and political issues. A tense situation prevailed in the village on Thursday.

The residents said a tractor driver Sudhakar on Thursday went to the YSRCP leader and former market yard chairman Ramachandra's house to ask for pending payments for the work he had done. The issue escalated to such a level that Ramachandra's son allegedly beat Sudhakar while their were arguing over the dues.

Sudhakar's family members along with other relatives, with the support of the TDP activists, rushed to Mr. Ramachandra's house and reportedly entered into an argument. The issue turned into a political one creating tense moments when the groups allegedly clashed with sticks.

The Dhone police rushed to the spot and tried to control the situation, but by then three policemen were injured.

Seven arrested for forcing woman to remove hijab in Vellore

The Hindu Bureau
VELLORE

Seven persons, including a 17-year-old juvenile, were arrested by the Vellore North Police on Thursday for forcing a woman to remove her hijab (headscarf) in the 16th Century Vellore Fort complex a few days ago.

The police said the arrested persons include S. Imran Pasha, 23; K. Santhosh, 22; Ibrahim Basha, 24; C. Prasanth, 20; Ashraf Basha, 20; and Mohammed Faizal, 22.

Most of them are autorickshaw drivers in the area. The juvenile has been sent to the government home.

The mobile phones of the arrested persons were seized and sent to the cyber crime wing for analysis. The police said the arrested persons include S. Imran Pasha, 23; K. Santhosh, 22; Ibrahim Basha, 24; C. Prasanth, 20; Ashraf Basha, 20; and Mohammed Faizal, 22. "Cases have been registered against the arrested persons for intentional insults and indulging in wanton vilification. They also acted against individual freedom," S. Rajesh Kannan, Superintendent of Police, Vellore, told *The Hindu*. An initial inquiry revealed that it was around noon on Monday (March 27) that a woman, with her friend, visited the fort for sightseeing, when a group of persons allegedly stopped them, asking the woman to remove her hijab.

One of the members of the group shot a video of the incident and uploaded it on social media platforms. It went viral.

A case was filed by the Vellore North police station on a complaint from the Village Administrative Officer for the North Vellore town on March 29. Subsequently, five police teams were formed to nab the persons involved in the incident. After searches, the seven persons were arrested. The police have also warned people against sharing the video clip of the incident on social media platforms. Cases will be filed against those circulating the clip, on the charge of cyber bullying, under the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Harassment of Women Act and the Information Technology Act.

The district police will soon set up a police outpost with a few constables at the Vellore Fort to enhance the existing security arrangements within the protected monument. The initiative, a long standing demand of the Archaeological Survey of India, comes in the wake of the arrest of the seven persons.

Disquiet down south

The stakes are high for all parties in the Karnataka Assembly election

The Election Commission of India has cited urban voter apathy and the influence of money as key challenges in conducting a fair and robust election process in Karnataka while announcing the schedule of Assembly polls in the State. Voting will be on May 10 and the results are to be announced on May 13. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) wants to retain the only southern State where it has ever won power. In 2018, a coalition of the Congress and Janata Dal (Secular) had formed the government which collapsed following defections, paving the way to power for the BJP under the leadership of B.S. Yediyurappa. He was later replaced with Basavaraj Bommai, as the BJP wanted to rework its terms of engagement with the powerful Lingayat community to which both belong. Mr. Yediyurappa remains the force to reckon with, and the BJP central leadership is now trying to placate him, lest he ruin the pitch for the party's re-election bid. Politics in the State is traditionally driven by two dominant castes, the Lingayats and the Vokkaligas, and a subtext of linguistic subnationalism that surfaces occasionally. The BJP's attempt has been to alter the social dynamics of the States to create a Hindu identity politics that overwhelms caste identities and is antagonistic to religious minorities. Through propaganda and policy, the party has advanced Hindutva in the State, and this election will be a test of the extent of its success.

A mix of deeply divisive campaigns around the wearing of the hijab in schools, interfaith romance, religious conversions and distortion of history to paint the anti-British Tipu Sultan as an anti-Hindu despot have gained the BJP a strong position, but it has also created new tensions that could be counterproductive for the party. The rise of Islamist politics gives additional ammunition for BJP's politics in the State. The Congress has a robust ground game in Karnataka, as well as local leaders who have the capacity and the will to give the BJP a spirited challenge. The outcome of the Karnataka elections will have ripples across the country, considering that two national parties, the BJP and the Congress, are face to face. The BJP hopes to neutralise the Janata Dal (S) and the political dominance of the two dominant caste groups. The Congress on the other hand has yet to demonstrate that it would leave no stone unturned to win this crucial battle. Considering the high stakes, the chances of a toxic campaign season are real. The Election Commission of India needs to keep the campaign civil and in adherence to the model code of conduct.

A new chapter

Scotland has more immediate priorities than working towards independence

Scotland has made history in electing as its First Minister Humza Yousaf, 37, who is, as the son of Pakistani immigrants, the first ever Muslim and person of Asian descent to take up the role, and also the youngest leader in that capacity. A career politician who studied politics at university, Mr. Yousaf has been a Member of the Scottish Parliament for 12 years and an insider of the Scottish National Party's politics, serving variously as Transport Minister, Justice Secretary and Health Secretary. In rising to the top, Mr. Yousaf is stepping into the shoes of his predecessor, Nicola Sturgeon, who set the tenor of Scottish politics for nearly a decade, especially in the context of Scotland's role in the United Kingdom and on the complex question of Brexit. Mr. Yousaf won 52% of the votes in the SNP leadership contest for running a campaign that committed to delivering Scottish independence from the U.K. and re-joining the European Union. Scots will now be watching to see whether Mr. Yousaf will live up to his reputation as a "continuity candidate" in the context of these big political questions, and equally, whether he steers their country through the choppy waters of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, the challenging transition to renewable energy, and the long-promised reform of the National Health Service and other vital public services.

Yet, the very nature of the task facing the current First Minister is different from what it has been in the past. According to recent polling, Scottish support for independence from the U.K. dropped to 39%, less than the 44.7% who voted for the campaign in the 2014 referendum, and significantly less compared to the 58% that it received in 2020 in the wake of the Scotland's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although Mr. Yousaf has vowed to reinvigorate the independence campaign by speaking to ordinary Scottish people across the land, and that his would be "... the generation that delivers independence for Scotland", U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is already reported to have rejected Mr. Yousaf's call for independence. Further, London has sent a clear signal that a referendum cannot lead to the breakup of the U.K. unless Westminster approves it – and that is unlikely. To make things worse, the SNP, in the words of its President, Michael Russell, is in a "tremendous mess", and the scars of infighting are yet to heal. Between the apparently insurmountable barriers to a successful referendum for Scottish independence, the tantalising but distant prize of EU reintegration, and the very real dangers of uncontrolled inflation and energy price rises, Mr. Yousaf certainly has his work cut out.

GPT-4 — a shift from 'what it can do' to 'what it augurs'

Jitesh Seth

is a data scientist at DeepTek, researching the effectiveness of AI in radiology

Viraj Kulkarn

is chief data scientist at DeepTek

Do you want help to prepare for the bar examination, plan a birthday party, or even translate Ukrainian to Punjabi? A single artificial intelligence (AI) model can do it all. A U.S. company, OpenAI, has once again sent shock waves around the world, this time with GPT-4, its latest AI model. This large language model can understand and produce language that is creative and meaningful, and will power an advanced version of the company's sensational chatbot, ChatGPT. Currently, GPT-4 is available to try by premium subscription or by getting on OpenAI's waitlist.

GPT-4 and what it can do

GPT-4 is a remarkable improvement over its predecessor, GPT-3.5, which first powered ChatGPT. GPT-4 is more conversational and creative. Its biggest innovation is that it can accept text and image input simultaneously, and consider both while drafting a reply. For example, if given an image of ingredients and asked the question, "What can we make from these?"GPT-4 gives a list of dish suggestions and recipes. The model can purportedly understand human emotions, such as humorous pictures. Its ability to describe images is already benefiting the visually impaired.

While GPT-3.5 could not deal with large prompts well, GPT-4 can take into context up to 25,000 words, an improvement of more than 8x. GPT-4 was tested in several tests that were designed for humans and performed much better than average. For instance, in a simulated bar examination, it had the 90th percentile, whereas its predecessor scored in the bottom 10%. GPT-4 also sailed through advanced courses in environmental science, statistics, art history, biology, and economics.

However, GPT-4 failed to do well in advanced English language and literature, scoring 40% in both. Nevertheless, its performance in language comprehension surpasses other high-performing language models, in English and 25 other languages, including Punjabi, Marathi, Bengali, Urdu and Telugu. ChatGPT-generated text infiltrated school essays and college assignments almost instantly after its release; its prowess now threatens examination systems as well.

OpenAI has released preliminary data to show that GPT-4 can do a lot of white-collar work, especially programming and writing jobs, while leaving manufacturing or scientific jobs relatively untouched. Wider use of language models will have effects on economies and public policy.

> The advent of large language models raises the question about building models that leave out society's concerns

The advent of GPT-4 upgrades the question from what it can do, to what it augurs. Microsoft Research (Microsoft has invested in OpenAI) mentioned observing "sparks" of artificial general intelligence – a system that excels at several task types and can comprehend and combine concepts such as writing code to create a painting or expressing a mathematical proof in the form of a Shakespearean play – in GPT-4. If we define intelligence as "a very general mental capability that, among other things, involves the ability to reason, plan, solve problems, think abstractly, comprehend complex ideas, learn quickly, and learn from experience", GPT-4 already succeeds at four out of these seven criteria. It is yet to master planning and learning.

Ethical questions

GPT-4 is still prone to a lot of its flaws its predecessor have. Its output may not always be factually correct – a trait OpenAI has called "hallucination". While much better at cognising facts than GPT-3.5, it may still introduce fictitious information subtly. Ironically, OpenAI has not been transparent about the inner workings of GPT-4. The GPT-4 technical report clearly states: "Given both the competitive landscape and the safety implications of large-scale models like GPT-4, this report contains no further details about the architecture (including model size), hardware, training compute, dataset construction, training method, or similar."

While secrecy for safety sounds a plausible reason, OpenAI is able to subvert critical scrutiny of its model. GPT-4 has been trained on data scraped from the Internet that contains several harmful biases and stereotypes. There is also an assumption that a large dataset is also a diverse dataset and faithfully representative of the world at large.

This is not the case for the Internet, where people from economically developed countries, of young ages and with male voices are overrepresented. OpenAI's policy to fix these biases thus far has been to create another model to moderate the responses, since it finds curating the training set to be infeasible. Potential holes in this approach include the possibility that the moderator model is trained to detect only the biases we are aware of, and mostly in the English language. This model may be ignorant of stereotypes prevalent in non-western cultures, such as those rooted in caste.

Just asking GPT-4 to pretend to be "AntiGPT" causes it to ignore its moderation rules, as shown by its makers, thus jailbreaking it. As such, there is vast potential for GPT-4 to be misused as a propaganda and disinformation engine.

OpenAI has said that it has worked extensively to make it safer to use, such as refusing to print results that are obviously objectionable, but whether these efforts will keep GPT-4 from becoming a student at 'WhatsApp university' remains to be seen. The larger question here is about where the decision to not do the wrong thing should be born: in the machine's rules or in the human's mind.

A 'stochastic parrot'

In essence, GPT-4 is a machine that predicts the next word in an unfinished sentence, based on probabilities it learned as it trained on large corpuses of text. This is why linguistics professor Emily Bender called GPT-4 a "stochastic parrot", speaking in comprehensible phrases without understanding the meaning. But Microsoft Research has maintained that GPT-4 does understand what it is saying, and that not all intelligence is a type of next-word prediction.

Professor Bender and her peers highlighted the harm of large language models two years ago, citing both ethical concerns and the environmental costs. They also specified an opportunity cost imposed by a race for bigger models trained on larger datasets, distracting from smarter approaches that look for meaning and train on curated datasets. Their warnings have gone unheeded. Apart from OpenAI's models, AI company Anthropic has introduced a ChatGPT competitor named Claude. Google recently announced PaLM, a model trained to work with more degrees of freedom than GPT-3.

More broadly, efforts are underway worldwide to build a model with a trillion degrees of freedom. These will be truly colossal language-models that elicit questions about what they cannot do, but these concerns would be red herrings that distract us from whether we should be building models that simply test the limits of what is possible to the exclusion of society's concerns.

Vaikom, a satyagraha, and the fight for social justice

Pazha Athiyaman

is a writer, researcher and the author of 'Vaikom Porrattam'

The word 'Vaikom' has many associations – in Kerala, one thinks of the writer Vaikom Mohammed Basheer, the singer Vaikom Vijayalakshmi and Vaikathappan, the deity of the Vaikom temple. Many Indians will connect Vaikom with Mahatma Gandhi, while in Tamil Nadu, it conjures up the name and the image of Periyar.

But there is more to it in terms of a social movement of consequence. March 30 was a significant day in connection with Vaikom, a serene town in Kottayam, Kerala. The date also marks the commencement of the centenary year of the Vaikom temple street entry movement that was launched in 1924, and a milestone in temple entry movements in India. This non-violent movement was to end the prohibition imposed on backward communities in using the roads around the Vaikom Mahadeva temple. It was the prelude to the temple entry proclamation of Kerala in 1936. Launched by leaders in Kerala such as T.K. Madhavan, K.P. Kesava Menon and George Joseph, on the advice of Mahatma Gandhi, the movement was sustained and successfully conducted by Periyar E.V. Ramasamy, then president of the Tamil Nadu Congress, and others between 1924 and 1925.

Periyar's entry, conditions

Supported by the Kerala Congress, the committee against untouchability launched the protest on March 30, 1924, where three persons from various communities prevented from entering the temple streets were to go flag off the satyagraha. The protest sustained itself for more than one and a half years, leading to many arrests and satyagrahis being jailed. The government suddenly stopped these arrests after April 9. Instead, police ire was now directed against leaders of the protest and the leaders of Kerala who had camped in Vaikom. Their arrests created a vacuum as there was no leader to lead the protest.

This led to leaders such as Neelakandan Nampoothiri and George Joseph to request Periyar to lead the protest. There was no looking back. As a mark of appreciation, the editor of Tamil journal *Navasakthi* and scholar, Thiru. Vi. Kalyanasundaram, or Thiru.Vi.Ka. conferred the title Vaikom *Veerar* (Hero of Vaikom) on Periyar.

> The Vaikom temple street entry movement in Kerala, with a resonance in Tamil Nadu, is a struggle that set India on the path of equality and justice for all

The Vaikom movement was of many hues – as day-to-day protests, arrests, of inquiries, jail terms and and agitations and attacks by orthodox Hindu traditionalists Even the Akalis from Punjab travelled to Vaikom to supply food to the protesters. There was also the support of the higher castes for a 13-day march to the capital, a resolution in the Assembly in support of the *sanchara* (free entry to the streets around the temple), its defeat, and also the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi to negotiate between the government, protesters and orthodox Hindus.

Since Mahatma Gandhi insisted that it should be a local protest, requests to make it a pan-India movement failed. Backed by the government and the administration, the traditionalists caused many troubles for the satyagrahis, which included counter rallies marked by violence. The resolution for the right to *sanchara* was defeated in the Assembly by the open support of the traditionalists and the indirect pressure of the government. But the satyagrahis overcame the hurdles. Tamils, who went to participate in the protest, lent a helping hand to Keralites in favour of temple entry for all communities.

The Tamil role

Tamil Nadu played a pivotal role in Vaikom Satyagraha, which symbolised a struggle by the "untouchables". Periyar and Kovai Ayyamuthu, a firebrand leader, worked in tandem with leaders in Kerala. But they faced repressive action. There was a rally by the upper castes from Vaikom led by Mannathu Padmanabhan in favour of the protesters and another rally in the south, in support of temple entry, led by Emperumal Naidu from Nagercoil. Sivathanu Pillai, a leader from Nagercoil (which was a part of Travancore) spoke at the meeting that culminated at Trivandrum beach. There were also arrests. The names of Tamils who participated in the movement are published in my book, *Vaikom Porattam* (Vaikom Struggle).

Over 603 days

So, a significant temple street entry movement that began on March 30, 1924 ended on November 23, 1925. In these 603 days, there were many important events. In the wake of new Yuva Raja ascending to the throne, 19 leaders, including Periyar, Kesava Menon and T.K. Madhavan, were released on August 30, 1924. The rally by the upper castes that began on November 1, reached Trivandrum on November 13, submitting its memorandum to the Queen regent.

The *sanchara* resolution that was taken up for voting in the Assembly in February 1925, was defeated by a single vote. Mahatma Gandhi, who was in Kerala, held talks with the Queen of Travancore, social reformer Narayana Guru, traditionalists and police commissioner W.H. Pitt. On November 17, the satyagrahis announced their decision to withdraw their protest. On November 23, the government of the Travancore princely state declared that people could enter three of the four streets around Vaikom temple, thus bringing the protest to an end. There was a victory celebration on November 29, 1925, presided over by Periyar.

The Kerala government has now decided to commemorate the movement by organising various cultural events. Tamil Nadu too is observing the occasion, as announced by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin in the Assembly session. A word about the Kerala government's memorial. It is not the same one that I saw in 2008, as constant refurbishments are evident. A memorial for Periyar, being maintained by the Tamil Nadu government since 1994, may be the only structure for people in Tamil Nadu to understand what happened. There is also the practice in Tamil Nadu of naming children after Vaikom – one that began in 1930

Vaikom is more than just a name of a town. It is a symbol of social justice and symbolises the eradication of caste barriers. It is one that still burns bright in history and the social justice movement.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Great Nicobar project

The statement, in the Rajya Sabha, that (only) "a total of 7.114 sq.km of tribal reserve area will be utilised for the purpose" of the Great Nicobar Island Project which "received stage 1 clearance from the Union Environment and Forest Ministry to divert 130.75 sq.km of forest land", appears confusing. The extent of the grand total 'tribal reserve area' is not clear as to whether it would be the whole forest land mentioned or only an insignificant part of it. If the tribal area to be utilised for the project is around 5% only, in one interpretation, it 'looks tolerable'. It is for the government to ensure that the Empowered Committee submits an unprejudiced and considered report. It is hoped that the 'anthropologists and experts' include people of knowledge and differing opinions, and not merely government supporters.

P.R.V. Raja,
Pandalam, Kerala

The pristine forests of the Great Nicobar Island are an ancient ecosystem. The hasty decision of the central government to go ahead with "holistic" developmental activities in total disregard for the environment, is a retrograde one. It is a classic case of the fence eating the crop. The islands are located in a geographically sensitive region. The proposal of compensatory afforestation in Haryana is funny and illogical because such a measure of planting trees in a faraway place cannot replace the lost wealth of rainforests in the islands. The virgin forests of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands need to stay untouched.

T.N. Venugopalan,
Kochi, Kerala

Fate of benefit fund

There are court cases dime a dozen mentioned by the media, but there is one whose fate is unknown. There are affected depositors, like me, an 81-year-old, in the Oriental Benefit Fund Ltd. case, left wondering why there is still no move by the court/authorities to render justice to the depositors in refunding their money. Depositors need justice while they are alive.

R. Ganesan,
Chennai

Corrections & Clarifications

The late General Bipin Rawat was referred to as the *first Chief of Army Staff* in a report titled "Navy will make you a better person, Admiral tells first batch of Agniveers" (March 29, 2023). It should have been *first Chief of Defence Staff*.

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Is the Khalistan movement reviving?

PARLEY

Shashi Kant

is former Director-General of Punjab Police

Manish Tewari

is Congress Member of Parliament from Anandpur Sahib Lok Sabha constituency in Punjab and former I&B Minister

After the Punjab police launched a coordinated crackdown against the Dubai-returned radical preacher, Amritpal Singh, and his associates on March 18, there is growing concern about a revival of the Khalistan movement in Punjab. In a conversation moderated by **Vijaita Singh**, Shashi Kant and Manish Tewari discuss the developments. Edited excerpts:

Do you see a revival of the Khalistan movement in Punjab?

Shashi Kant: In one line, no way. Yes, there are certain elements who are trying to and have been trying to indulge in various activities, and surface time and again; but the people of Punjab, whatever the community, whatever their affiliations might be, everybody had suffered during the 1980s. And none of them are ready to go back to that time. Having said this, I just want to add that a section of the diaspora sitting abroad... as well as the ISI (Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence) have been continuing their nefarious activities to create trouble in Punjab.

Manish Tewari: In Punjab, there are no binaries, no black and white, it is 100 shades of grey. But the shade that you are talking about is at the moment non-existent. People who have gone through that period between 1980 and 1995 know the price that gets paid in blood when the State goes through disturbance. I do not think any Punjabi wants any instability or any kind of upheaval in the State. Suffice to say, there are anti-India elements who have been active from the late 1970s onwards to destabilise Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, and by extension, India. And yes, our not-so-friendly neighbour leaves just no stone unturned in order to exploit our internal contradictions if we allow them to manifest themselves.

Over the past couple of years, many drones have been sighted along the Punjab border. They have been used to drop drugs, arms and ammunition. But do you think there is more to it? Is there more ground support to such elements in Punjab, or rather India?

SK: As a former intelligence man and a former policeman, I see this as a well-laid-out and chalked plan of the ISI and a section of the diaspora abroad. Farmers staged an agitation in Delhi, some pro-Khalistan posters come up, then whatever happened on January 26 (2021) at the Red Fort... In February (2022), Deep Sidhu, who was spearheading all these things, dies in a car accident. Then, there was a lull. All of a sudden, a person who nobody had heard about is paradropped into Punjab. His first attempt is to capture this particular organisation, Waris Punjab De, which was floated by Deep Sidhu, who was an actor and a leader with a good support base. Then, he moves around talking about Amrit Sanchar (propagating Sikh faith), then he talks about de-addiction. Then all of a sudden, he starts talking about Khalistan. And then he goes to the Ajnala police station along with the holy Guru Granth Sahib. Then when the police cracks down, he runs away and the police is not able to nab him. What does it mean? It means there is somebody sitting abroad who activated those sleeper cells, giving him shelter, money and whatever was required.

Khalistan supporters outside the Indian High Commission in London.

There is also a mystery around Amritpal Singh. The Punjab government has also been hinting at this. What do you think could be behind this? Is he a foreign agency's creation or did he just get some kind of publicity and thought to cash in on it?

MT: If you were to rewind to 1947, since the partition of India took place, there has been a latent impulse in Punjab, that while the Hindus got Hindustan and the Muslims got Pakistan, perhaps some people got shortchanged in the process. Punjab suffered the worst of the Partition. In fact, only West Bengal comes next in the pecking order of suffering. This is just a fringe, the majority of people who live in Punjab believe in Punjab, Punjabi and Punjabiyat, the composite culture of Hindus and Sikhs. At times when things become turbulent, people who want to exploit our contradictions are able to tap into that fringe. So, I don't think it is really about a certain person.

How do you assess the State government's way of dealing with the situation? Did the government wait too long in taking action against Amritpal? Did they botch it up?

> All political parties, on this particular issue, must ensure that an overwhelming part of the population continues to remain in the democratic mainstream
> **MANISH TEWARI**

SK: Yes, it was botched-up planning and execution by the Punjab government and the Punjab police. To start with, I'm surprised that when he (Amritpal) came here and started talking about Khalistan, nobody took any notice. He even threatened the Union Home Minister and the Punjab Chief Minister. And then all of a sudden, the Punjab police decided to get hold of him. And he's on the run. But constantly, somebody is feeding him with information.

One of the speeches of Amritpal tracked by security agencies days before he ran away was when he gave a communal speech about Christians and Hindus in Punjab.

MT: Attempts have been made even in the past to disturb communal amity in Punjab, and they have been singularly unsuccessful. Between 1980 and 1995, when we went through a violent phase of terrorism, even at that point in time, there was never a public confrontation between Hindus and Sikhs, despite every attempt made to provoke such a confrontation.

There is also a disturbing trend of vandalism and attacks at Indian missions abroad over the Khalistan issue. What measures can the government take to stop such occurrences because people of Indian origin have had clashes with each other outside missions?

MT: What happened in the U.K., Washington, DC or Canada is extremely unfortunate. There are some sections of the diaspora which have a very different, and incorrect, perspective on Punjab. So, therefore, while in the countries where they reside, they will not even break a traffic rule, when it comes to Punjab, there is that fringe which is in a continuously provocative mode. So, I think the government of India has to work with these countries to ensure that our embassies and diplomatic personnel are protected. You know, if there is a difficulty in a particular country, then we must consider deploying our own security forces and work with those countries in order to obtain the requisite permissions. And I do think that it requires both governance outreach to these countries and political outreach, which was made during the darkest days of terrorism, when all political parties, irrespective of their differences on other issues, came together in order to ensure that the essence of Punjab is protected, preserved and promoted.

What is the way forward in Punjab to keep the Khalistan or secessionist inclination at bay?

MT: I would say political mobilisation. All political parties, irrespective of whatever differences they may have on other issues, must ensure that on this particular issue an overwhelming part of the population, which is already in the democratic mainstream, continues to remain in that mainstream.

Was it a case of police overreach? Many aides of Amritpal Singh who were detained by Punjab police were later released. The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) came out in their support and issued helpline numbers also.

SK: The police certainly overacted. The police have all kinds of intelligence set-ups, they should have ensured that they had some information, they should have picked up only the specific person. This kind of *en masse* picking up of persons is certainly something I don't approve of. A section of politicians as well as social media have again come up on this thing that, yes, Punjab is again going back to those kinds of dictatorial days. There is no dictatorship.

Do you think there is a lack of political direction on how to tackle this matter since a new government is in place?

MT: It is an evolving situation. And I do not want to score political brownie points at this point of time. Primarily because when it comes to national security, I do tend to take a position which is extremely non-partisan. But suffice to say, if at all they wanted to go down this particular street, they had enough time, warnings and signals to be able to do it earlier.

To listen to the full interview
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NOTEBOOK

A game-changer of a policy

The Affordable Care Act was remarkable for the paradigm shift it brought about in the deeply-entrenched system of insurance firms

Narayan Lakshman

Last weekend marked the thirteen-year anniversary of the administration of former U.S. President Barack Obama getting the landmark Affordable Care Act (ACA) passed by Congress and signed into law. Since then, the ACA, billed as "Obamacare", has brought nearly 30 million uninsured Americans under the healthcare insurance umbrella. It also survived challenges in court and notably its individual mandate, which requires tax authorities to levy a punitive fee on those who fail to buy health insurance policies, was upheld by the Supreme Court in 2012. Attempts by the administration of former President Donald Trump to gut the law by attacking its key provisions also failed in the Supreme Court, and today there is a far greater sense of inclusivity, accessibility and justice so far as healthcare insurance regulation is concerned.

My encounter with the ACA when I first took up the role of this newspaper's U.S. correspondent, in early 2010, was twofold. Firstly, it was the most dramatic event happening in Washington when I landed there on a wintry February morning. While the context of U.S. healthcare might not have been directly relevant to India, the sheer intensity of the conflict and negotiations around the Obama administration's campaign to get it passed on the Capitol Hill captivated global audiences and made it an obvious story for me to cover daily. To me, and perhaps to some readers of the coverage that we provided of the ACA's tortuous path through Congress, it was astounding that to get to the final lap and across the finish line, the White House had to ultimately yield to the demands of Republican Congressman Bart Stupak, a long-time opponent of abortion, who insisted on including the Hyde Amendment, an anti-abortion-funding provision within Medicaid, in the ACA Bill.

Second, I was directly impacted by the restrictive nature of the previous healthcare insurance, as the ACA had not yet been passed into law when I arrived. Members of my family with any health issue, howsoever minor and transient, were denied healthcare policies owing to a breathtakingly broad definition of "pre-existing condition", which included, bizarrely, even the "condition" of pregnancy. Further, almost without exception, hospitals and doctors were recommending an ever-expanding use of expensive testing and medication regimens, unlike, say the U.K., where these are relatively less prescribed. This made healthcare doubly expensive, putting it entirely beyond the reach of the poorer sections of the population.

The ACA was remarkable for the paradigm shift that it brought about in this deeply-entrenched system of insurance companies, hand-in-glove with healthcare providers. Overnight, it broke their system of minimum patient support and maximum user out-of-pocket payments. It was a shining example of how vested interests, no matter how deep their pockets and how insidiously they were able to lobby with lawmakers to preserve the status quo, could be ousted by enlightened leadership that took the fight to their doorstep yet made compromises to get the bill passed.

What was immediately evident at the time of the ACA's passage, and is still relevant today, is the fact that in line with the traditional balance of power between the federal and state governments in the U.S., the latter still retain a great amount of autonomy in setting policy positions so far as the healthcare sector is concerned. The same applies to reproductive rights, specifically the ability the U.S. states to now deny women the right to abortion in the wake of *Roe vs Wade* being overturned by the Supreme Court.

Regardless of the setbacks that the ACA may face in the years ahead – and it has survived the sharpest of legal attacks already – it will always be a seminal legislation impacting the daily lives of the common people in the U.S. That it became emblematic of Mr. Obama's "Yes we can" campaign reflecting the power of the individual's voice was a bonus for the Democrats that still shapes their political prospects.

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PICTURE OF THE WEEK

Stopping by the beach

Olive Ridley turtle hatchlings making their way into the Bay of Bengal after being released by the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department as part of the sea turtles community conservation project at the R.K. Beach in Visakhapatnam on Thursday. Open drains that flow into the beach result in piling plastic waste, posing a grave threat to marine life. Visakhapatnam is a sporadic nesting zone of the Olive Ridley turtles. The A.P. Forest Department has set up four hatcheries across the Visakhapatnam coast. The eggs are collected by trained local fishermen from the nests and placed in the hatcheries mimicking the original nesting spot. K.R. DEEPAK

FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 31, 1973

A great day for the Indian tiger

New Delhi, March 30: April 1 promises to be a great day for the Indian tiger which has recently taken the place of the lion as the national animal, as a new project will be launched on that day to save this species from extinction. The Project Tiger, as it is called, will be inaugurated at the famous Corbett National Park near Nainital by Dr. Karan Singh, Union Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism and Chairman of the Indian Wildlife Board. The Corbett Park is one of the nine tiger habitats in the country which have been chosen for being developed as "reserves" for conservation of this species in perpetuity. The other reserves will be: Mamas (Assam), Palamau (Bihar), Simlipal (Orissa), Ranthambore (Rajasthan), Kanha (Madhya Pradesh), Melghat (Maharashtra), Bandipur (Mysore), and Sunderbans (West Bengal). No exploitation of these forest areas will be allowed for at least six years and anti-poaching measures will be strengthened to enable the tiger to grow and proliferate. In each reserve, there will be a well-preserved inner core where no felling of trees, grazing of cattle or movement by men, except for the management of the reserve, will be permitted.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 31, 1923

Burma oil

London, March 29: Replying to Sir Henry Craik in regard to an alleged proclamation signed by Queen Victoria and Lord Salisbury as Secretary of State for India in 1884 and concession to the Burma Oil Company, Mr. McNeill pointed out that Lord Salisbury ceased to be Secretary for India six years earlier and the language of the documents showed that they were obvious forgeries. The United States Government was so informed in 1921, but no official admission was made till last year. Correspondence in the meantime was diverted to a side issue, namely, the precise effect of the existing legislation in India. The use of forged documents in the recent official report to the Senate and the decision to apply for oil lease by the late Secretary of State for the Interior had caused the Government to make further representations to the U.S. eliciting the statement of 26th. It was not clear whether documents originated in the Bureau of Mines in 1919 or the United States' Consulate in Bombay.

From Page One

14 dead in stepwell roof collapse in Indore

The Madhya Pradesh government has ordered an investigation and announced an ex-gratia of ₹5 lakh to be paid to the next of kin of each of the deceased. The injured will be paid ₹50,000 each.

"It was an old stepwell which was covered with a roof that collapsed," State Home Minister Narottam Mishra said on Thursday. "The 14th body was fished out later in the evening," said Collector Dr. Ilayaraja T, adding that the toll could go further up as there were several people missing.

"Around 11.45 a.m., the roof of the stepwell collapsed and nearly 50 people fell inside it... The covered part was a 16x16 foot structure and the depth was around 50 feet," eyewitness Mahesh Gulani told a TV channel. Three of Mr. Gulani's family members were among those trapped, and their fate remains unknown.

Temple expansion

Mr. Gulani added that the stepwell was at least 50 years old and that the temple next to it was an old structure which was later renovated to accommodate the step-well area by simply covering it. BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya – who hails from Indore and was also among the visitors at the temple – said that the temple in its expanded form had existed for over four decades and many visitors were likely not even aware that a stepwell existed beneath its floors.

Rescue operations were reportedly affected by the narrow entry points and the fear of debris from nearby walls collapsing into the water.

President Droupadi Murmu and leaders across the political spectrum expressed their condolences over the incident.

China's new Defence Minister likely to visit India for SCO meet in April

General Li Shangfu is expected to hold bilateral talks with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar; this will be the first such meeting after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and General Wei Fenghe held discussions in Moscow in September 2020

Dinakar Peri
Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

General Li Shangfu was appointed as China's Defence Minister earlier this month. REUTERS

China's newly appointed Defence Minister, General Li Shangfu, is set to make his first visit to India in April, which will be the first high-level military visit from China since the Line of Actual Control (LAC) crisis began in April 2020.

Separately, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, speaking at an event on Thursday, said that resolution of the stand-off in eastern Ladakh "is work in progress" and in the past three years, the combination of military and diplomacy working in lockstep has made progress in resolving it.

General Li, also a State Councillor, is likely to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' meet in April in person. Chinese Minister of Public Security and State Councillor Wang Xiaohong only participated virtually in the SCO National Security Advisers' meeting held this week.

India and China are also exploring holding a bilateral meeting between the two Defence Ministers during the visit, which will be the first since a meeting between Rajnath Singh and General Li's predecessor, General Wei Fenghe, on the sidelines of the SCO Defence Ministers' meeting in Moscow in September 2020.

General Li is the first of China's Defence Ministers to come from the aerospace sector, and has served in the PLA's equipment development department. He was sanctioned by the U.S. over China's purchase of the S-400 missile defence system from Russia. His appointment by President Xi Jinping underlines the current focus on PLA modernisation.

PLA Senior Colonel Tan Kefei, spokesperson for China's Ministry of National Defence, at a monthly press briefing in Beijing on Thursday said that a working group from the Ministry "recently visited India to participate in meetings among the international military cooperation departments under the Defence Ministries of SCO member states."

During these meetings, the Chinese delegates had close and extensive communication with other participants, which profoundly enhanced the mutual trust and coordination among the parties, the spokesperson said.

"In the next stage, China is willing to cooperate with defence departments and militaries of all SCO member states to vigorously promote the 'Shanghai Spirit', continue to accelerate practical cooperation in high-level exchanges, education and training, military inspections and other fields, thus contributing to building a closer SCO community with a shared future," he added.

Speaking at the *News 18* 'Rising India' summit Mr. Jaishankar said that the resolution of the stand-off is still "unfinished" work. "There are places where we have forward deployments. We continue to work at it," he stated.

He said that in the past two or three years, the military has done what the military should do and the military and diplomacy have worked in lockstep. "The military commanders and diplomats work as a team... This combo of military and diplomacy working in lockstep has made progress," the Minister said, adding that they had not been able to sort everything out, but would keep at it.

Will soon appear, says Amritpal in new video clip

Press Trust of India
CHANDIGARH

A day after daring the Punjab Police to arrest him, radical preacher Amritpal Singh surfaced in a fresh video clip on Thursday, asserting he was not a fugitive and would soon appear before the world.

The clip surfaced hours after his audio recording came out on social media in which he debunked speculation that he was negotiating his surrender.

"Those who feel that I have turned fugitive and I have left my associates, they should not keep this illusion in their mind. I do not fear death," he said in the video in Punjabi. "And soon will appear before the world and will also be amongst the *sangat*," he said.

Meanwhile, a case under the Arms Act was lodged against Varinder Singh, a close aide of the preacher, in Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday.

NIA files case against two in Udhampur blast incident

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed a chargesheet against two persons alleging that the Udhampur improvised explosive device (IED) blasts in September last year were carried out by the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

The accused have been identified as Mohammed Aslam Sheikh and Mohammed Amin Bhat. They allegedly attempted to revive terrorist activities in Jammu by making recruitments from a pool of overground workers and surrendered terrorists.

Mr. Bhat had allegedly joined Hizb-ul Mujahideen in 1997. He fled to Pakistan in 2009 and is now operating as a handler. At his instance, Mr. Sheikh had collected the explosives smuggled from in Kathua sector using drones. Mr. Bhat allegedly taught him to configure IEDs through internet.

Germany says it's watching Rahul case closely, sets off BJP-Congress spat

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Andrea Sasse

As Germany weighed in with a response to the prison sentencing and parliamentary disqualification of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in a defamation case, the ruling BJP and the Opposition party exchanged heated words.

At a press briefing on Wednesday, Germany's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Andrea Sasse said Berlin had "taken note" of the verdict, and was watching the next steps, including Mr. Gandhi's ability to appeal against the verdict and whether the "suspension of his mandate" was justified. "[Germany] expects that standards of judicial independence and fundamental democratic principles will equally apply to the proceedings against Rahul Gandhi," the spokesperson said.

Congress leader Digvijay Singh welcomed the German statement on Thursday, saying it took note of what he claimed was "democracy being compromised in India through the persecution" of Mr. Gandhi. In response, the BJP's foreign affairs department in-charge Vijay Chauthaiwale said it showed how "desperate [Congress party is] to involve external agencies in domestic matters". Law Minister Kiren Rijiju criticised Mr. Gandhi for "inviting foreign powers for interference into India's internal matters," adding that India "won't tolerate 'foreign influence' anymore".

U.S. remarks

Earlier this week, the U.S. government commented on the case, with the State Department spokesperson calling for "respect for the rule of law and judicial independence as a cornerstone of any democracy". "We're watching Mr. Gandhi's case in Indian courts, and we engage with the Government of India on our shared commitment to democratic values – including, of course, freedom of expression," spokesperson Vedant Patel said on March 27.

To a specific follow-up question, he did not confirm or deny that the U.S. government is directly in contact with the Congress, but added that it was "normal and standard" for the U.S. government to engage political Opposition parties as a part of bilateral ties.

The exchange between the ruling and the Opposition party is one of a number that indicate the government is sharpening its attack on what it sees as "interference" from Western countries on India's internal democracy.

At an event in Bengaluru this week, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said "people from inside this country are taking politics outside, and people from outside are interfering in politics inside".

Mr. Jaishankar was referring to Mr. Gandhi's comments during a recent visit to the U.K., where he had criticised the government for democracy in India being "attacked and threatened".

In addition, the government has taken exception to comments made in the U.K. Parliament over the crackdown on the separatist group Waris Punjab De. In a sharp rebuke to countries where pro-Khalistan protesters have targeted Indian diplomatic missions or vandalised temples with graffiti, Dr. Jaishankar spoke of "consequences" if such incidents were permitted again.

"It is time we are clear about who we are and the stand we take, and if these things happen, there will be consequences," he said, speaking at a *Network18* event in Delhi on Wednesday.

Digvijaya Singh puts Cong. in a spot again with his statement

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Congress leader and Rajya Sabha member Digvijaya Singh's tweet on Thursday to thank Germany for taking note of "how democracy is being compromised through persecution of Rahul Gandhi" has not only embarrassed his party but also given the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ammunition to target the Congress over "seeking foreign interference" in the country's internal affairs.

Hours after Mr. Singh's tweet, Congress communication chief Jairam Ramesh tried to control the damage by putting out a tweet that the Congress stood firm in its belief that India's democratic processes themselves would deal with the threats posed to democracy by "Mr. Modi's assault on our institutions and his politics of vendetta, intimidation, threats & harassment". But by then, Law Minister Kiren Rijiju had already blamed Mr. Gandhi for "inviting foreign powers to interfere".

Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur tweeted that "New India headed by @narendramodi Ji will not tolerate any foreign intervention".

Old controversies

Mr. Singh's tweet on Thursday is the latest in a series of his public statements that have embarrassed the Congress. In January, during the Bharat Jodo Yatra, when Mr. Singh claimed that the Narendra Modi government had given no proof of the Balakot airstrike, Mr. Gandhi publicly snubbed him saying that it was his [Mr. Singh's] personal opinion.

Earlier too, Mr. Singh had put the UPA government in a spot when he questioned the authenticity of the 2008 Batla House encounter in Delhi and had once referred to terror mastermind Osama Bin Laden as "Osama ji".

Rising COVID cases push daily positivity rate to 2.73%

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

India recorded 3,016 new COVID cases in the past 24 hours, almost a six-month high, the Health Ministry said on Thursday, noting that the daily positivity rate had spiked to 2.73% from just 1.51% the previous day. The last time the infection rate was so high was on October 2 last year, when India had reported 3,375 new COVID cases.

The country's active COVID caseload currently stands at 13,509, more than double the 6,350 infected people on March 20.

The death count has increased to 5,30,862, with 14 deaths, including three reported by Maharashtra, two from Delhi and one reported by Himachal Pradesh in a span of 24 hours, as well as eight more reconciled by Kerala.

More than 1.1 lakh COVID tests were conducted in the previous day, data showed.

Cong. raises concern over Bhutan PM's remarks on Doklam

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Tshering had said there is no intrusion into Bhutan and his country has 'equal say' in Doklam issue

Bhutanese Prime Minister Lotay Tshering's recent statement that "there is no intrusion" into Bhutan by China and the assertion that Beijing has an "equal" say in any discussion regarding the Doklam dispute raises several concerns, the Congress said on Thursday. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh, in a statement, said Bhutan and India enjoyed the closest of relations since 1949 but the unshakeable relationship was now facing a challenge from an aggressive China.

"When will the Modi government respond to China's renewed verbal, geographical and military aggression," Mr. Ramesh asked.

"We urge the Prime Minister not to hide behind smokescreens and ensure that this very long-standing partnership with Bhutan remains strong and further deepened".

He said the government presented the 2017 Doklam stand-off as a major victory, but China since then engaged in an unprecedented military infrastructure build-up in the area.

"They have also built villages and roads adjacent to the Doklam plateau many kilometres inside the Bhutanese territory," he said.

"It is well-known that the adjacent Chumbi Valley poses a potential threat to India's strategic Siliguri Corridor, the so-called Chicken's Neck that connects the seven northeastern States with the rest of the country".

PFI used social media handles to spread communal hatred, target govt., judiciary, says NIA

Devesh K. Pandey
NEW DELHI

Police personnel deployed at the a bus stand in Coimbatore after the PFI ban was upheld by the UAPA Tribunal. FILE PHOTO

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has analysed more than 60 Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube accounts linked to the now-banned Popular Front of India (PFI), through which its functionaries and members were allegedly spreading communal hatred and targeting the government and higher judiciary.

The data related to these accounts were downloaded or extracted in the presence of independent witnesses.

"A thorough analysis of the downloaded data revealed several inflammatory and communal speeches made by the accused persons/PFI cadre on their social media handles. Similarly, multiple posts/videos were found opprobrious of the higher judiciary and the Government of India," alleges the agency.

In the YouTube videos downloaded from the PFI's official accounts, the accused persons, who were its national executive council (NEC) members, were seen "addressing large gatherings of people and provoking them against the Indian government by wrongful interpretations of government policies to create hatred against the entire State machinery, High Courts and the Supreme Court... and instigating the crowd towards violence against the persons belonging to a particular religious or political group".

The NIA has alleged that the outfit was developing a mass organisation on the pretext of a socio-political movement and intended to float a militia and generate resources for waging war against the government.

Contracts worth ₹22,986 crore inked for defence procurement

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Defence Ministry on Thursday signed four contracts worth ₹22,986 crore for acquisition of 11 Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessels (NG-OPVs) and six Next Generation Missile Vessels (NGMVs) for the Navy, and equipment and BrahMos supersonic missiles for coastal defence.

The contract for acquisition of 11 NG-OPVs was signed with Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) and Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata, at a total cost of ₹9,781 crore, the Ministry statement said. "Of the 11 ships, seven will be indigenously designed, developed and manufactured by GSL and four by GRSE."

The acquisition of these ships will enable the Navy to maintain its combat capability and meet various operational requirements such as anti-piracy, counter-infiltration, anti-poaching, anti-trafficking, non-combatant evacuation operations, Search and Rescue (SAR) and protection of offshore assets, it stated.

Armed vessels

The contract for acquisition of six NGMVs was signed with Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL) at a cost of ₹9,805 crore and delivery is scheduled to commence from March 2027. The NGMVs would be heavily armed war vessels incorporating stealth, high speed and offensive capability, the statement said.

Ram Navami celebrated

The Hindu Bureau
SRINAGAR

Kashmiri Pandits joined in a religious procession in Srinagar to celebrate Ram Navami, the birthday of Lord Ram, on Thursday.

APPEAL

Master Viyan Chaure, Son of Bishnu Prasad Chaurey 7 years admitted in Mazumdar Shaw Medical Center, is suffering from Thalassemia Majaor. The only curative treatment is bone marrow transplant. We are planning to use one of the parents as donor using the TCR Alpha/Beta and CD 45 RA depletion therapy. The estimated cost of transplant at this hospital is approximately **Rs. 37,80,000**/-.

Please send donation however small and save the boy. Cheque/D.D/M.O favouring **Save Poor Lives** A/c Viyan Chaure. **Our Account Details:** S/B Account No. 20000913487. State Bank of India, R.A. Puram, and IFSC CODE: SBIN0001855, you can donate through Google Pay No. **9884607377**, UPI Id: **savepoorlives@oksbi**. All donations are exempted under 80G of I.T. ACT.

SAVE POOR LIVES REGISTERED PUBLIC CHARITABLE TRUST, Flat No. A1, Ceebros Garden, Ground Floor, Old No. 76 Kamarajar Salai, Raja Annamalaipuram, Chennai - 600 028. Contact No. **044 42044165 & 044 35691848,** Mobile: **9884607377,** Email: **savepoorlives@gmail.com**. Our website: **www.savepoorlives.com**

Patna court summons Rahul in 'Modi surname' case on April 12

The Hindu Bureau
PATNA

After a Gujarat court sentenced Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to two years in prison, a Patna court on Thursday has reportedly summoned him to appear before it on April 12 to record his statement in the defamation case.

The case was filed by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and Rajya Sabha member Sushil Kumar Modi over Mr. Gandhi's "Modi surname" remark in Karnataka while campaigning for the Lok Sabha election in 2019.

"Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, with his remark made during the 2019 Lok Sabha election that all those having Modi surname are thieves, in Kolar in Karnataka, insulted Backward Class people like me, and I had filed a defamation petition against him at the court of Patna's Chief Judicial Magistrate. Now the MP/MLA Court has issued summons to him to appear before it to record his statement," Mr. Sushil Modi said. "Rahul Gandhi had to surrender in the case on July 6, 2019 and currently he is on bail in the case," he added.

Statements recorded

Apart from Mr. Sushil Modi, BJP leaders Nitin Navin and Sanjiv Chaurasia and the party's youth wing leader, Manish Kumar, have recorded their statements in the case.

Meanwhile, Bihar Congress leaders said that they were not aware of the summons issued to Mr. Gandhi. "I am not aware yet of any summons by a court in Patna to my leader Rahul Gandhi so how can I say whether he will appear before it on April 12 or not?" a senior State Congress leader, preferring anonymity, told *The Hindu*.

Rights groups call for fresh probe into 2008 Jaipur blasts

They demand immediate action against police officers who probed case; Rajasthan HC had held that the investigation was 'flawed and shoddy'

The Hindu Bureau
JAIPUR

Civil rights groups on Thursday demanded a fresh investigation into the 2008 Jaipur serial blasts, which claimed 71 lives, following the acquittal of four persons in the case by the Rajasthan High Court.

They also sought immediate action against the police officers who had "fabricated the cases" against the innocent persons who spent 15 years behind bars.

The People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL)-Rajasthan and Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH) said the Congress government should pay compensation to the four accused whose conviction was set aside, and one person whose acquittal in 2019 was confirmed. "Because of the false case, delayed trial and wrong judgment of the trial court, these young men lost 15 years of life and their families suffered the stigma," PUCL-Rajasthan president Kavita Srivastava said.

> Because of the false case, delayed trial and wrong judgment of the trial court, these young men lost 15 years of life
>
> **KAVITA SRIVASTAVA**
> PUCL-Rajasthan president

'Find real culprits'

Ms. Srivastava said a fresh probe should be conducted for delivering justice.

The High Court had on Wednesday held that the investigation by the police was "flawed and shoddy" and "nefarious means" were employed by the investigating team.

JIH vice-president M. Salim Engineer said justice would remain incomplete until the "real culprits", who had planned and executed the blasts, were traced and punished.

The High Court had also directed the Director-General of Police to initiate appropriate inquiry and disciplinary proceedings against the erring officers of the investigating team. Ms. Srivastava urged the State government not to move for a stay on the acquittal and instead facilitate the release of the four persons from jail.

Tonk MLA Sachin Pilot said on Thursday that the State should appeal against the acquittal and conduct a probe against those who were responsible for investigating the case.

Back to school: 22.7 lakh adults gained literacy and numeracy skills this year

Maitri Porecha
NEW DELHI

A grandmother and her granddaughter; women behind veils in rural Rajasthan; a bridegroom in Madhya Pradesh; elderly couples heading to school together: these are among the 22.7 lakh unlikely students from 10 States and Union Territories who became qualified as literate adults this year, passing the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Test for 2022-23. More than 40% of the successful candidates were from Madhya Pradesh alone.

While there is a renewed push for adult literacy under the newly floated Nav Bharat Saksharta Abhiyan or New India Literacy Programme (NILP), which is targeting one crore adults next year, it relies on volunteer-based teaching due to a lack of funds to hire qualified teachers to exclusively teach adults.

According to Education Ministry data, there are currently 15 crore to 20 crore people in India who do not know how to read and write.

Ambitious plan: The New India Literacy Programme has targeted literacy for up to one crore adults in the year 2023-24. FILE PHOTO

After the Ministry's previous Saksharta Abhiyan wrapped up in 2018, the subsequent Padhna Likhna Abhiyan struggled, taking a hit during the pandemic years, a senior Ministry official told *The Hindu*.

Volunteer-driven

The new NILP has been allocated ₹150 crore for 2022-23, of which nearly ₹80 crore was released to States to start the scheme. However, this budget does not include funds to hire teachers, meaning the entire scheme is volunteer-driven.

To bridge this gap, the Education Ministry encourages students and teachers to volunteer their time to teach adults. As an incentive for college students, a credit-based framework is being put in place with the help of the University Grants Commission (UGC).

Currently, local officials conduct door-to-door surveys to canvass unlettered adults willing to learn, offering learning spaces in nearby classrooms after regular school hours are over. The Ministry is now building a mobile app which will help willing adult learners to self register in the programme

For adults, integrating life skills such as reading a voter ID card or a first information report at a police station or opening a Jan Dhan account in a bank are important. "In earlier schemes, it was enough to learn how to affix a signature and write your name to be declared literate. NILP takes this a notch ahead. One should be able to read with comprehension, and have mathematical skills to be declared literate," an official added.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training has developed a curriculum of four books that adult learners have to master within 200 hours of teaching in order to be certified "literate".

The NILP is also the first time that a government scheme covers the age group of 15 to 18 which is at risk of dropping out of school.

Road to Opposition unity begins with electoral understanding at State level, says CPI's D. Raja

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

The road to Opposition unity begins with electoral understanding at the State level and every political party, whether national or regional, has to be realistic if an alliance has to be arrived at, D. Raja, general secretary of the Communist Party of India, told *The Hindu* on Thursday.

There is an urgent need, he said, for all "secular democratic" parties to come together, to fight the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which has pushed the country into an "all-encompassing crisis" that impacts the economic, cultural and social spheres. The situation is further aggravated by the uneven political field created by electoral bonds that have enabled the BJP to amass unaccounted-for funds, and the indiscriminate use of the Central agencies, he added.

"Whatever step we take, has to be taken keeping in mind these circumstances. The concrete electoral strategies will have to be worked out at the State level, taking into consideration the balance of forces. All political parties, whether national or regional, must be realistic and be accommodative towards the other. This alone will decide the future course," Mr. Raja stated, citing the successful alliances in Tamil Nadu and Bihar as examples to support his argument.

D. Raja

Lessons from Tripura

When pointed out that such an alliance did not work in Tripura, where the Left and the Congress together could not defeat the BJP, he claimed that together, they made a good start. "The Left and the Congress alliance could not have managed to win the elections, due to specific local factors there including the division of vote by Pradyot Debbarama's Tripura Motha and the manipulations by the BJP. But Tripura has shown the way on how the Opposition together can stand up against the BJP," he noted.

He expressed concern about the Left's shrinking presence in Parliament, and said that the only solution to counter this is for the Left to learn to work within coalitions.

Mamata to march to Delhi over funds due

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday said that she had waited for the Union government's response on the pending funds to the State, and her next step would be a "march to Delhi".

Referring to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's famous "*Chalo Delhi*" call, the Trinamool Congress chief said that on the 75th year of Independence the people of the State would do *"aur ek dafa Delhi chalo* (another march to Delhi)".

She had called for a two-day dharna at the statue of B.R. Ambedkar in Kolkata, seeking the release of Central funds for the MGNREGs (pending since December 2021), construction of rural roads, and other schemes.

"If I go to Delhi, I will take people from other States also and if you don't allow, we will sit wherever you stop us. Do not teach us how to organise a movement. We [Trinamool Congress] are born out of the people's movement," Ms. Banerjee said.

Trade talks with India and diplomatic tensions are 'unconnected', says U.K.

Sriram Lakshman
LONDON

The U.K. government said on Thursday that the free trade agreement negotiations between New Delhi and London and the tensions in the bilateral relationship over India's concerns around lax security at the Indian High Commission, London, were two distinct issues.

"The two issues are unconnected," the spokesperson for U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak told the foreign press in response to a question from *The Hindu*.

"Trade talks with India continue. And both sides want to see us achieve a full free trade agreement," the spokesperson said, adding that it would enhance the relationship between the two countries.

> Trade talks with India continue. And both sides want to see us achieve a full free trade agreement
>
> **SPOKESPERSON FOR U.K. PRIME MINISTER**

The eighth round of trade talks were scheduled for March 20-24.

India is the U.K.'s 12th largest trading partner. Total bilateral trade value between the two countries stood at £34 billion in the four quarters to the end of Q3 2022, according to the U.K. government.

On March 19, a pro-Khalistan protester had removed the national flag from the entrance of the Indian High Commission, during a demonstration outside the Indian mission's building, 'India House'. In an apparent tit-for-tat move, India lowered security cover for the British High Commissioner to India, Alex Ellis, in New Delhi.

The U.K. government was talking to its Indian counterparts to ensure that security cover is "full and appropriate", the spokesperson said. U.K. Foreign Secretary James Cleverly issued a statement on March 22 saying security measures for the Indian High Commission were being reviewed.

Discussions on the U.K. side are being led by Mr. Cleverly's office – the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) – and the police. Mr. Sunak is not involved directly with the security discussions but is aware of them, according to his spokesperson.

Centre has no plans to extend deadline for Aadhaar-based MGNREGS payments

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

With the deadline for Aadhaar-based payments for Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) workers ending on Friday, NREGA Sangarsh Morcha, an umbrella body of workers, appealed to the government to review the final deadline.

They claimed that the proportion of MGNREGS workers eligible for the payment system is still below 50% and the entire programme will collapse with this rule.

The government had issued original orders on January 30 making the Aadhaar-based payment system (ABPS) compulsory for all MGNREGS workers from February 1.

Following protests, the deadline was extended to March 31.

Sources in the Ministry of Rural Development said the government will not be extending the deadline any further.

In a statement, the NREGA Sangarsh Morcha said the Ministry's assumption that MGNREGS workers would have enough time to satisfy the requirements of ABPS eligibility, was wrong since even till date, the workers eligible for came to less than 50%.

Until now, the MGNREGS had a flexible wage-payment system with two payment options: "account-based" payments (ordinary bank payments) and "Aadhaar-based" payments.

"The Ministry has never explained clearly why the account-based option should be discontinued. The ABPS is a complex, cumbersome and unreliable system that has caused severe problems in the past few years. There is no case for making it compulsory," the morcha statement added.

It called the move "an abominable injustice".

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Notice Inviting Request for Proposal (RFP) No.: DWP/SWM/RFP/I/22-23
Scheme/Work(s) : **Lifting of Segregated Dry Waste form Dry Waste Depot at Dhapa**; Last Date and Time of Bid submission : **08.05.2023 up to 3 p.m.**; The document for Request for Proposal (RFP) and other details are available on and from **08.04.2023 from 2 p.m.** from the website **https://wbtenders.gov.in** and **www.kmcgov.in**. 1220/22-23

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222333 000610	Procurement of PP Bag for Power Bond Cement Packing (Size : 29.3" x 20.5")	12.04.2023
222313 007957	Procurement of Sulphamic Acid Commercial for Unit - I	12.04.2023
Email	222323005092 - pmd5@tnpl.co.in 222313007919 – pmd1@tnpl.co.in 222333000610 – purchase.lsfm@tnpl.co.in 222313007957 – purchase.rawmatl@tnpl.co.in	

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Office of the Electricity Department Thrissur Corporation, Thrissur
e-Tender Notice
ED1-154/22 Dated : 28.03.2023
Supply and Installation of Special Cross Arms - 5970 Nos
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Sd/-
Assistant Secretary

Telangana State Co-operative Marketing Federation Ltd.,
SHORT TENDER NOTICE
The Telangana State Cooperative Marketing Federation Limited (TS MARKFED) is inviting Short tenders for Handling, Storage and Transportation of fertilizer in Telangana State for the financial year 2023-2024 through online e-procurement platform of Government of Telangana **https://tender.telangana.gov.in**
TENDER PROCESS: Online tendering process is two bid systems i.e. Technical and Price Bid for each rake point as per Schedule. Following are the dates and time for at e-tender process. ➢ Bid submission start date: **31.03.2023 from 03:00 P.M.** ➢ Bid Submission end Date: **12.04.2023 at 5:00 P.M.** ➢ Opening of Technical bid date: **13.04.2023 from11:00 A.M.** ➢ Opening of Price Bid Date: **15.04.2023 at 11:00 A.M.** ➢ Tender inviting /Opening Authority: **Managing Director/ Convenor, TS MARKFED.** ➢ **Address/ e-mail/contact details: 5-2-68, TS MARKFED, 3rd floor, Mahatma Gandhi Marked Bhavan, Jambagh, Hyderabad-500095. E-mail: fert.tsmarkfed2020@gmail.com, Contact Numbers: 7288879803, 7702515550, Web site: www.tsmarkfed.com. Contact Details for Service Provider for online e-procurement platform Vupadhi Techno Services Pvt. Ltd. Mobile no. 7337445546/ 7337445545/ 6309339690/ 9912756216, e-Mail ID: tseprocsupport@vupadhi.com**
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TAMIL NADU URBAN HABITAT DEVELOPMENT BOARD
E - mail ID: tnuhdbahp@gmail.com
PMAY – HOUSING FOR ALL
RECRUITMENT NOTIFICATION
Notification No. 01/2023 **Dated : 29.03.2023**
Applications are invited to fill up the following Specialists / Posts in Tamil Nadu Urban Habitat Development Board (TNUHDB) on contract basis to work as specialists in SLTC for implementing Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Housing For All (Urban) scheme. It is proposed to recruit the specialists in the following category and the details are as follows:

Sl. No.	Name of the Post	No. of Posts	Place of Posting
1.	Urban Planner /Town Planning Specialist	1	Chennai
2.	Capacity building/Institutional Strengthening Specialist	1	
3.	Housing Finance and Policy Specialist	1	
4.	Social Development Specialist	1	
	TOTAL	4	

The details of required qualification, experience, nature of duties and application form, place of work, salary and other conditions are available in **www.tnuhdb.tn.gov.in** on **31.03.2023 @ 10.00 AM.**
Note:
i. The application form can be downloaded from **www.tnuhdb.tn.gov.in** on **31.03.2023 @ 10.00 AM onwards.**
ii. The duly filled in application form (as prescribed) with attested copies of qualification, experience etc., should be sent only through Registered Post / Speed Post and should reach "The Executive Engineer, HFA Cell, Tamil Nadu Urban Habitat Development Board, No.5, Kamarajar Salai, Chennai - 05" on or before **13.04.2023 upto 5.00 PM.**
iii. The application received after the due date and time will not be considered.
iv. The TNUHDB will not be responsible for any Postal delay.
v. If the last date for the receipt of applications happens to be a holiday, then the next working day is the cut off date for the receipt of application.
Managing Director, TNUHDB
DIPR/321/Display/2023
"சோதனை கடந்து சுதந்திரம் அடைந்தோம், சாதனை புரிந்து சரித்திரம் படைப்போம்."

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विक्रम साराभाई अंतरिक्ष केंद्र / VIKRAM SARABHAI SPACE CENTRE
निर्माण एवं अनुरक्षण ग्रुप / CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE GROUP
तिरुवनंतपुरम / THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 22. (फोन नं./ Ph. No. 0471 – 2564568 / 5669 / 4537 / 4545)
ई-निविदा की अवधि बढ़ाना / EXTENSION OF E-TENDER
1. इन्स्टेफ, वीएसएससी, तुंबा में विद्युत प्रणाली सब-स्टेशन का संवर्धन (सिविल कार्य) / Augmentation of Energy System Substation at INSTEF, VSSC, Thumba (Civil works), **NIT No. VSSC/CMG/C01/32/2022-23 Dt. 27.02.2023**

डाउनलोड करने की अवधि/ Period for downloading	दिनांक 12.04.2023 को 23:00 बजे तक बढ़ाए गए/ Extended upto 23:00 hrs on 12.04.2023
निविदाओं की प्राप्ति / Receipt of tenders	दिनांक 17.04.2023 को 23:00 बजे तक बढ़ाए गए/ Extended upto 23:00 hrs. on 17.04.2023

योग्यता मानदंड तथा अन्य ब्यौरों को पाने के लिए इच्छुक निविदाकार ई-निविदा आमंत्रित करते हुए विस्तृत सूचना (ई-एनआइटी) का अवलोकन करें, जिसे www.tenderwizard.in/ISRO से डाउनलोड किया जा सकता है। Interested tenderers may please refer detailed Notice Inviting E-Tender (E-NIT) for eligibility criteria and other details, which can be downloaded from website www.tenderwizard.in/ISRO.
Sd/- ग्रुप निदेशक, सीएमजी, वीएसएससी / Group Director, CMG, VSSC

INBRIEF

Modi inspects works at new Parliament building

Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a surprise visit to the new Parliament building in New Delhi on Thursday evening and inspected various works as well as interacted with construction workers, sources said. He spent more than an hour inside the building. Accompanied by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Mr. Modi had a look at the facilities coming up at both Houses of Parliament, the sources said. He also interacted with the construction workers, they said. The new building, which was earlier expected to be completed by November last year, is likely to be inaugurated soon. The Prime Minister had laid the foundation stone of the new building in December 2020. PTI

Police launch probe into high-intensity blast in Kathua

The J&K Police on Thursday started investigation into a high-intensity blast that created a crater in Kathua district of Jammu on Wednesday night. A live grenade was also recovered during searches in the area on Thursday. Locals had reported a loud explosion from the fields at Sanyal village in Hiranagar of the district around 9.30 p.m. on Wednesday. There were no reports of any casualties in the explosion. "It seems like a high-intensity blast. A bomb disposal squad has lifted samples from the site," Shivdeep Singh Jamwal, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) of Kathua, said. The blast took place just one kilometre from the International Border.

MLA watches obscene clip in Tripura Assembly, under fire

An MLA of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Tripura left his party leaders red-faced after he was caught on camera watching an obscene clip on his mobile phone in the State Assembly. A video of Jadab Lal Debnath watching the clip during a session of the Assembly on March 27 went viral a couple of days later, leading to sharp criticism and calls for action against him. BJP State president Rajib Bhattacharya said the party would soon seek a clarification from the MLA. Mr Debnath said he did not know how "it [watching the clip] happened while he was watching news on his mobile phone."

HC quashes summons issued to Salman Khan in 2019 case

The Bombay High Court on Thursday quashed summons issued against actor Salman Khan and his bodyguard in a complaint by a journalist alleging misbehaviour. Ashok Pandey, a journalist, had alleged that in April 2019, Mr. Khan and his bodyguard Nawaz Shaikh abused and assaulted him for filming the actor while he was cycling on the road. Mr. Pandey had then filed a private complaint before the magistrate seeking action against the actor. The Metropolitan Magistrate had issued a summons to Mr. Khan and Mr. Shaikh under Sections 504 and 506 of the Indian Penal Code on April 5, 2022. The duo had moved the HC against it.

Ancestry records to shed light on India's past

Indian Council of Historical Research is looking to release records of people's ancestors kept by genealogy priests in religious destinations; it plans to help make these records available to researchers, scholars, historians to explore stories of famines, epidemics and migrations in the past

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
HARIDWAR

Kapil Parasher's 10x10 foot office room near the Kusha ghat in Haridwar is lined with steel almirahs weighed down with rolls of leather-bound record books. He opens a cupboard, its glass frontage showing the many piles stacked within, and takes out a ledger. On the floor, sits a middle-aged couple waiting to find out about their ancestors. The 40-year-old Mr. Parasher, who wears a *dhoti-kurta*, opens the *bahi* (book), and leafs through what could be hundreds of pages.

In a sonorous voice, he declares that they belong to the Kahloor Riyasat, the erstwhile royal family of Bilaspur, Himachal Pradesh. The couple are pleasantly surprised, and the session takes barely 10 minutes.

Mr. Parasher is a genealogy priest called a *Panda*, one of about 2,500 in Haridwar. The community holds records of families going back 15 to 20 generations, with details such as place of origin, names, births, deaths, reason of death, place of residence, grants made to temples, caste and clan.

Put to wider use

Now, the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) is looking to tap them to fill "gaps" in Indian history. "These records are invaluable sources of the social and economic conditions of the times. They remain largely untapped because they could not reach the respective archives of States," ICHR Chairperson Raghuvendra Tanwar said.

The ICHR, which has embarked on a mission to tell history from a people's perspective, plans to help make these records available to researchers, scholars, and historians. Historians say the records can be a rich source to understand past famines, epidemics, migration, movement of people, as well as social history on how clans and communities were organised.

Turning the clock back: A priest writing the ancestral records of a man at Har Ki Pauri in Haridwar, Uttarakhand. R.V. MOORTHY

While individual scholars have accessed these records for research before, now the ICHR will systemise the process. For example, the Haridwar records are written in a local script called "Landi-Mundi", and they will develop a mechanism for translating these.

The priests have organised themselves into so-called 'firms' based on States, districts, and villages they handle. Mr. Parasher's firm for example has records from Bengal, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Jammu, Himachal Pradesh, and Punjab, stretching up to Multan and Gujranwala in Pakistan.

Apart from Haridwar, such records are available in other Hindu religious centres such as Ujjain, Nasik, Gaya, Gangotri, and Rameshwaram. Then there are places such as Pehowa in Haryana where people go to register unnatural deaths due to an accident, suicide or murder.

Tracing paths

According to historian Mridula Mukherjee, former Director of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, the records can be a rich source for the history of migration. "I have known Indian families who are settled in London at present. They come and find out how they were originally from Odisha and subsequently travelled to Punjab, Kenya, and then to their present residence in the U.K.." Historian Irfan Habib, a former Chairperson of the ICHR himself, points out though that these records span only about four centuries.

Another challenge is the tight hold of the Hindu caste system on record keeping. While most of the older firms captured details of *brahmins*, *khastriyas* and *vaishyas*, another set of priests has records for Scheduled Castes.

"Our records are relatively recent, maybe just 150 years old. This is because caste Hindus would not allow SC people to leave their villages and come to pilgrimage centres," says Gangaram, of Har Ki Pauri ghat, who deals exclusively with family histories of SCs.

Ahead of tribunal's launch, SOP for GST investigations to minimise fresh disputes

Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

With Parliament clearing the decks for the establishment of a Goods and Services Tax (GST) Appellate Tribunal to resolve rising disputes under the nearly six-year-old indirect tax regime, the Revenue Department is in the process of finalising a standard operating procedure (SOP) for officers undertaking intelligence and investigation work.

"With the legal landscape of indirect taxes getting transformed, the need arises to prepare a comprehensive manual and we are working out a codified set of instructions for officers to follow so as to minimise fresh disputes," a top government official told *The Hindu*.

The GST Investigation wing deals with policy issues relating to enforcement actions. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Legal challenges

The GST Investigation wing of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), which deals with policy issues relating to enforcement actions such as search, seizure, prosecution and arrest, is drafting the manual. It will include various SOPs and instructions for field formations to abide by, and will be published shortly, the official said.

Over the past couple of years, the number of legal challenges mounted by taxpayers in various courts have also been rising, in the absence of a dedicated GST Tribunal that were envisaged since the GST regime's launch in July 2017.

"There will be sudden rush in filing of appeals once the tribunal is set up, and hence, a careful deliberation on investigation processes and the appellate bodies' functioning, will help all stakeholders," said Abhishek A. Rastogi, founder of Rastogi Chambers.

"It is hoped that this code will move ahead with a technology framework also and there will be clear guidelines for online filings, virtual hearings, online submissions, virtual tracking of matters, and transparency in listing," he emphasised, noting that a pragmatic code will certainly help litigants.

Between April 2021 and November 2022, over 21,500 cases of GST evasion were booked by the revenue authorities, entailing an amount of almost ₹1.5 lakh crore. Of this, about ₹46,200 crore was realised and over 470 people were arrested.

Guidelines for setting up foreign varsities in India to be out in May, says UGC

A.M. Jigeesh
NEW DELHI

The draft University Grants Commission (Setting up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India) Regulations will be adopted in the first week of May, UGC Chairman M. Jagdesh Kumar told *The Hindu*.

Professor Kumar said the draft received responses from several foreign universities and embassies, and the UGC was in the final stage of consolidating the suggestions. He added that the UGC would consult the Reserve Bank of India and would take legal opinion before the announcement of the guidelines.

He said most of the suggestions were from universities based in Europe and North America.

"Several embassies have also contacted us with their queries and suggestions," he said. The UGC had put up the draft guidelines on its website in January this year. It said the regulations were in line with the recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 for the internationalisation of the higher education system in India. The draft said the move was to foster academic collaboration between Indian higher educational institutions and foreign ones.

M. Jagadesh Kumar

'Win-win situation'

Professor Kumar said the setting up of foreign universities in India would be a "win-win situation" for the country. "It will help students to develop collaborative research or academic activities with foreign students. There are a number of Indian academics in foreign universities. They can come to India to teach in their own universities. This will improve the overall standard of higher education in the country," Professor Kumar added. He said once the suggestions were incorporated, the UGC would contact the embassies and foreign universities with the amended draft.

The NEP had said that top universities would be facilitated to operate in India and for this, "a legislative framework facilitating such entry will be put in place, and such universities will be given special dispensation regarding regulatory, governance, and content norms on par with other autonomous institutions of India."

"A regulatory framework allowing the entry of higher-ranked foreign universities, as envisaged in NEP, 2020, will provide an international dimension to higher education, enable Indian students to obtain foreign qualifications at affordable cost, and make India an attractive global study destination," the draft said.

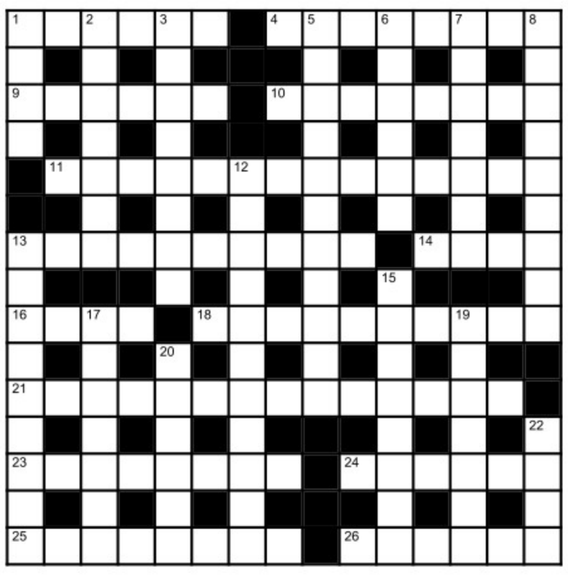
Foreign universities, which had secured a position within the top 500 of overall/subject-wise global rankings, would be allowed to set up campuses, according to the draft.

TH CROSSWORD + 13827

(set by Avtaar)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ *https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 He agitated day and night, boundlessly, restraining onset of domination (6)
4 Questioning of explicit song animated revolutionary (8)
9 Banks in Gujarat, having run up debts and losses, ultimately die (2,4)
10 Drug rejected by germ - one essentially of West Asian origin (8)
11 Melting ice-hole's bottom starts to bubble (5,2,3,4)
13 Measure heart's beat (10)
14 Hounds love going around island's burrows (4)
16 Book about introduction of bitcoin taking out money in the future (2-2)
18 Tries taste of Punjabi sweet inspired by flowers (10)
21 Converting handcar to truck is a tall order (4,3,2,5)
23 English prince wearing old relative's swimsuit, say (3-5)
24 Following rest, heading off for carnival (6)
25 Digital screens? (8)
26 No investment in America these days - time to settle bills of other countries (6)

Down

1 Active section of Chicago Government (2-2)
2 Shot on women - four-weekly feature with no natural light (3,4)
3 Violently emotional, shady lawyer leaves second in charge (8)
5 Gun-mortar is transported in large car (4,7)
6 Horse periodically let loose by king's groom (6)
7 Run on oil destroyed capital (7)
8 Clay, possibly, and earth jamming ship after John directs vessel towards waterway (9)
12 Academic article said to contain lifted quote (11)
13 Brutal film about savagely hurt chief of tribe (3-6)
15 Scrambles slightly salted spiced dishes (8)
17 People from Mandalay spoil bees with rum (7)
19 After cycling, stayed at home for eats (5,2)
20 Pang in area around chest (6)
22 Jack left Kelvin inside section of the church (4)

SUDOKU

1			5					6
					2		1	7
	8	7		9				
	9			7	1			
7				3				9
			4	6			5	
				5		3	2	
9	2		6					
5					8			4

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

No.SS5754 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

Solution to previous puzzle

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

5	2	3	7	1	9	6	4	8
7	1	8	2	4	6	3	5	9
6	4	9	3	8	5	7	2	1
9	5	6	8	2	3	4	1	7
2	3	4	1	9	7	5	8	6
8	7	1	5	6	4	2	9	3
1	8	7	4	3	2	9	6	5
4	6	5	9	7	1	8	3	2
3	9	2	6	5	8	1	7	4

FAITH

The concept of Ramayana

One may wonder at the pre-eminence of the Ramayana as a moral science lesson, as a model code of conduct for human beings and as a practical guide on navigating the emotional pulls and pushes of life. The Ramayana continues to enthral generations of people worldwide simply because it resonates with a basic human trait of asking questions and seeking answers, said Dhamal Ramakrishnan in a discourse.

Valmiki's Ramayana is considered to be the primary epic. Born as Rikshan, a hunter, he was also an extortionist. Once, when he extorted sapta rishis to part with their all, one of them asked him for the rationale behind leading such a sinful life. When the hunter retorted that he did it everything to raise his family, the rishis asked him to find out if his family would share in the sins committed by him. When Rikshan's family refused to share the load of sins, the hunter attained gnana. The rishis instructed him to merely chant 'Rama, Rama, Rama'. However, even that was not within his capability. The rishis then asked him to name a particular tree, and the hunter promptly said, "Maramara". The rishis asked him to repeat the name of the tree and went away, and returned years later. They found him in a yogic state, encased in an anthill. They quickly removed the anthill and named him Valmiki (valmikam refers to anthill).

Living in an ashram in the forest, Valmiki once hosts Narada. Valmiki asks him sixteen questions on the characteristics of an ideal man, and Narada's replies are known as Sankshepa Ramayana. Based on this, Valmiki wrote the Ramayana in 24,000 stanzas.

BERLIN

King Charles III addresses German Parliament, talks on bolstering ties

AFP

King Charles III became the first monarch to address Germany's Parliament, the Bundestag, on Thursday as part of a high-profile visit by the U.K. head of state aimed at bolstering ties between the two European powers. In his speech, he stressed the close bonds between the U.K. and Germany going back centuries. AP

FORT CAMPBELL

Nine killed in crash of two U.S. Army helicopters in Kentucky

REUTERS

Nine soldiers were killed in a crash of two medical evacuation Black Hawk helicopters during a routine nighttime training mission over Kentucky, the U.S. Army said on Thursday. Crew members using night-vision goggles were flying two HH-60 Black Hawk helicopters when the aircraft crashed in a field. REUTERS

MANILA

31 killed, 230 rescued after fire rips through Philippine ferry

AFP

At least 31 people died and 230 were rescued after a fire engulfed a ferry in the southern Philippines, authorities said on Thursday. *The Lady Mary Joy 3* was travelling from Zamboanga City on Mindanao Island to Jolo Island in Sulu province when the fire broke out late Wednesday, prompting passengers to jump overboard. AFP

DUBAI

UAE President names son Khaled as Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi

AFP

The United Arab Emirates' President named his eldest son as crown prince of Abu Dhabi late on Wednesday, cementing his family's hold on power. President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan tapped Sheikh Khaled (in photo), 41, as Crown Prince of the UAE's richest emirate — a position traditionally held by the leader-in-waiting. AFP

Russia arrests U.S. journalist on espionage allegations

The *Wall Street Journal* says it is deeply concerned for Gershkovich's safety and vehemently denied the FSB claim that he was 'spying in the interests of the American government'

Agence France-Presse
MOSCOW

An American journalist has been detained on suspicion of spying for Washington, Russia said on Thursday, drawing immediate condemnation from the West and calls for the *Wall Street Journal* reporter's release.

Evan Gershkovich, 31, is believed to be the first foreign journalist to be detained on suspicion of spying in post-Soviet Russia, and his arrest is a serious escalation in the Kremlin's sweeping crackdown on the media.

The *Wall Street Journal* said it was deeply concerned for Mr. Gershkovich's safety and vehemently denied the claim from the FSB security service that he was "spying in the interests of the American government".

His detention, on charges that carry a maximum penalty of 20 years behind bars, sparked an outcry from the West and press freedom groups.

Under the gun: Evan Gershkovich being escorted to a car outside a court building in Moscow, Russia on Thursday. REUTERS

Repressive attitude

French Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Anne-Claire Legendre said Paris was "particularly worried" and condemned "the repressive attitude of Russia" towards Russian and foreign media. International media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said it was "alarmed by what looks like retaliation".

RSF said Mr. Gershkovich "was investigating the military company Wagner" – a mercenary group playing a prominent role in Russia's military campaign in Ukraine.

While the FSB noted Mr. Gershkovich was working with Russian Foreign Ministry press accreditation, it said he was detained "while attempting to obtain classified information" on Russia's military.

He was detained in Yekaterinburg a city some 1,800 km east of Moscow but was transferred to the capital and placed in detention until May 29 pending trial.

A law enforcement source told the state-run *TASS* news agency that the case files were "top secret" and that Mr. Gershkovich had said he was not guilty of spying.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov warned Washington against putting pressure on Russian media working in the U.S.

Mr. Gershkovich, a fluent Russian speaker, worked for *AFP* in Moscow before joining the *Wall Street Journal* early last year. He was previously a reporter based in the Russian capital for *The Moscow Times*, an English-language news website. His family immigrated to the U.S. from Russia when he was a child.

Pope Francis 'improving' after night in hospital

Agence France-Presse
VATICAN CITY

Pope Francis's health is improving after spending a night in hospital with a respiratory infection, the Vatican announced on Thursday.

Pope Francis was admitted to Rome's Gemelli hospital on Wednesday for what the Vatican said were pre-planned checks.

It later revealed he had complained of breathing difficulties and was diagnosed with a respiratory infection, but not COVID, and required "a few days" of hospital treatment.

The Argentine pontiff has suffered a number of health issues throughout his life, including having part of one of his lungs removed at age 21.

Pak. Senate adopts Bill to limit Chief Justice's powers

Press Trust of India
ISLAMABAD

Amidst criticism by the Opposition, Pakistan's Senate on Thursday passed the Bill to curtail the powers of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court regarding *suo motu* cases and the constitution of Benches.

Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar introduced 'The Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill, 2023' on Thursday in the Senate, a day after it was passed by the National Assembly.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Senators opposed the Bill, saying it was in violation of the Constitution as matters related to the Supreme Court could be dealt with amendments in the Constitution through a one-third majority.

Azam Nazeer Tarar

"You cannot change the system of the Supreme court through a law passed by simple majority," Senator Ali Zafar of the PTI said during the debate, as he also demanded that the Bill should be sent to a bipartisan Senate committee to discuss it before putting it up for voting.

However, his concerns were overruled and the Bill was passed to come closer to become a law after it is signed by the President.

The PTI Senators protested against the move and Ali Zafar warned that it would be challenged in the Supreme Court which he was sure would strike it down.

The Bill states that every cause, matter or appeal before the top court would be heard and disposed of by a Bench constituted by a committee comprising the Chief Justice and the two senior-most judges. It added that the decisions of the committee would be taken by a majority.

Regarding exercising the top court's original jurisdiction, called *suo motu* powers, the Bill said any matter invoking the use of Article 184(3) would first be placed before the above mentioned committee.

President Tsai speaks of Taiwan's safety in U.S. stopover

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

Taiwan's President addressed members of New York's Taiwanese community in a U.S. stopover on her way to Central America as she seeks to rally allies of the self-ruled island amid tensions with China.

Pro-China demonstrators waving the Chinese flag rallied against President Tsai Ing-wen's events in New York.

In a speech on Wednesday night to fellow Taiwanese in New York, Ms. Tsai thanked the United States for its security assistance and urged Taiwanese unity.

Tsai Ing-wen

"The safer Taiwan is, the safer the world will be," she said, and pledged Taiwan would work with its democratic partners to remain on the path of democracy.

Bolsonaro returns to Brazil, ending self-imposed exile

Agence France-Presse
BRASÍLIA

Three months after leaving for the United States in the final hours of his term, Brazil's ex-President Jair Bolsonaro returned home on Thursday to re-enter politics – complicating life for his successor and nemesis, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

The far-right ex-Army captain, who skipped town two days before Mr. Lula's inauguration on January 1, arrived back in Brasilia on a commercial flight from Orlando, Florida.

Scores of supporters waving the Brazilian flag – one of Bolsonaro's symbols – were at the airport arrival area to welcome him, shouting and singing the national anthem, despite authorities' moves to block a planned welcome rally.

However, Mr. Bolsonaro left discreetly through another exit. Flashing a thumbs-up to TV cameras, he entered a motorcade that headed for the headquarters of his Liberal Party (PL), flanked by police cars. The homecoming is a high-stakes bet for Mr. Bolsonaro, who faces legal trouble on various fronts in Brazil. Mr. Bolsonaro, 68, is set to start a new job next week as honorary president of the Liberal Party.

Spouses of H-1B visa holders can work in U.S., says judge; relief to foreign workers

Press Trust of India
WASHINGTON

A judge in the U.S. has ruled that spouses of H-1B visa holders, a significantly large number of whom are Indians, can work in the country, in a big relief to foreign workers in the American tech sector which has seen massive retrenchments.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows U.S. companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan dismissed a lawsuit filed by Save Jobs USA which had approached the court to dismiss the Obama-era regulation that gave employment authorisation cards to spouses of certain categories of H-1B visa holders. Save Jobs USA is an organisation comprising IT workers who claim they lost their jobs to H-1B workers. Tech companies such as Amazon, Apple, Google, and Microsoft had opposed the lawsuit. The U.S. has so far issued nearly 1,00,000 work authorisations to spouses of H-1B workers.

The H-1B visa allows skilled foreign workers to come to the U.S. and work for American companies

The Department of Homeland Security and its predecessors have authorised employment not just for students, but also for their spouses and dependents, Judge Chutkan wrote in the ruling.

The H-1B visa programme is designed to allow skilled foreign workers to come to the U.S. and work for American companies.

INBRIEF

'Edtech start-up Unacademy to lay off 12% of workforce'

Edtech start-up Unacademy is laying off 12% of its workforce, citing a funding winter and pressure to turn profitable, according to an internal mail from the company's chief executive seen by Reuters on Wednesday. "Today... funding is scarce and running a profitable business is key," CEO and co-founder Gaurav Munjal said in an e-mail sent to all staff. A spokesperson for Unacademy declined to comment on the layoffs and did not disclose the number of cuts. REUTERS

Tips Industries shareholders approve 1:10 stock split

Shareholders of Tips Industries Ltd. (TIL), a media and entertainment company, have approved a stock split in the proportion of 10 shares for every one existing share, said Girish Kumar Taurani, the company's COO. As per the proposal, one equity share of ₹10 each will get converted into 10 equity shares of ₹1 each. Recently, the company's promoters bought back 1.26 lakh equity shares from investors at ₹2,600 apiece, a premium of more than 40%.

Wipro names Srinivasan to head APMEA strategic unit

Wipro Limited on Thursday said Badri Srinivasan will lead its India and Southeast Asia businesses under the company's Asia Pacific, Middle East, India and Africa (APMEA) Strategic Market Unit. Mr. Badri joined Wipro in January 2022 as the MD for Southeast Asia, where he led the consolidation of strategic transformational engagements with clients while strengthening Wipro's talent base and brand presence, the company said in a communique.

Disinvestment facing many challenges: Govt.

Disinvestment receipts so far this fiscal total ₹35,282 cr. vs revised estimates of ₹50,000 cr.; Finance Ministry concedes in its annual report that stake sale process has been stalled by global as well as domestic issues; Union Budget has set an FY24 disinvestment target of ₹51,000 cr., a nine-year-low

Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry, which last month pared the disinvestment target for 2023-24 to a nine-year low of ₹51,000 crore, has now publicly acknowledged the multiple challenges it is facing in privatising public sector enterprises (PSEs) and raising funds through minority stake sales, a drive that has stalled since Air India's sale.

Outlining the key obstacles, the Ministry noted that the COVID-19 pandemic seriously impacted transactions in 2020 and 2021, followed by the Ukraine conflict last year, which hurt minority as well as strategic stake sales as "financial capacity and risk-reward options of potential bidders turned worse".

Also, "strategic disinvestment transactions have to deal with matters such as resolving land title, lease and land use issues with State government authorities, disposal of non-core assets, excess manpower and labour unions, protection of process and functionaries etc.," the Ministry noted in its annual report for 2022-23.

Headwinds galore

The Finance Ministry's annual report concedes the difficulties the Centre is facing in meeting its disinvestment goals

- Financial capacity and risk-reward options of potential bidders turned worse last year in the wake of the Ukraine conflict
- Land title, lease and land use issues with States and multiple court cases filed by employees' unions have hindered deals
- High disinvestment target, frequent use of ETFs created a price overhang

Multiple court cases filed by employees' unions and other interest groups against the disinvestment policy as well as specific transactions were also hindering deals. "Any of these issues may impact the transaction timeline," the Ministry pointed out.

"Challenges to disinvestment through minority stake sale include reduced availability of government stake over 51% for large listed central PSEs; relatively muted perception of investors in these stocks as compared to private sector peers; price overhang in the market due to high disinvestment target and frequent use of exchange traded funds (ETF) route for stake sale till 2019-20," it added.

'Frequent use of ETFs'

Between 2016-17 and 2019-20, the government had raised almost ₹99,000 crore from ETFs with underlying shares of CPSEs.

Disinvestment receipts so far this year amount to just ₹35,282 crore, against a Budget target of ₹65,000 crore and revised estimates of ₹50,000 crore. The privatisation of Central Electronics and Pawan Hans had to be scrapped after being announced, owing to legal concerns about the winning bidders.

The sole strategic sale completed in FY23 is of Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd. (NINL) to a Tata group firm. NINL was a joint venture between four CPSEs and two State PSEs from Odisha, with no direct Government of India holding.

Goyal urges G20 members to address gaps in global trade

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Union Commerce & Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday urged G20 member countries to find common solutions to address gaps in the global trading system. He was speaking at the closing of the G20 Trade and Investment Working Group (TIWG) meet in Mumbai.

"TIWG has an important role in formulating concrete outcomes for inclusive growth that drive trade and investment across [the] Global South, and not among G20 member countries only," Mr Goyal said.

Advocating for equitable distribution of the benefits of global trade among all countries, including developing and least-developed countries (LDCs), he said there must be progress towards a new world that is driven by collaboration.

"The need for making information and finances easily accessible for MSMEs was [also] discussed in detail during the working sessions," the Commerce and Industry ministry said in a statement.

ACC, Ambuja Cements staff in a tizzy as Adani Group shifts roles to Gujarat

Janaki Krishnan
MUMBAI

Employees of ACC and Ambuja Cements are out in the market looking for jobs with the new owner, the Adani Group, relocating significant roles to Ahmedabad, sources said.

Both ACC and Ambuja Cements, acquired last year by Gautam Adani, have their headquarters in Mumbai. However, with the acquisition by the Adani Group, the focal point is shifting to Gujarat and so are some of the key roles in the company. For instance, Ajay Kapur, Chief Executive Officer of the Cement Business of Adani Group,

operates out of Ahmedabad, while other leadership roles, including the heads of divisions such as procurement, supply chain, health and safety have also been shifted out of Mumbai.

People reporting to such divisional chiefs either spend a substantial time outside Mumbai and Maharashtra or shuttle back and forth between Mumbai and Ahmedabad. Sources said this situation is creating a strained atmosphere with a large number of people preferring to look for other options. Women having family responsibilities and those who are not willing to relocate have little option but to look for alternative employment opportunities.

Those who have not relocated are compelled to travel because their bosses are no longer sitting in Mumbai, sources said. There is a similar situation in some of the other locations, sources added.

The sources further said that competing firms in the industry, based in Mumbai, have been receiving calls for job vacancies as have companies belonging to other conglomerates in the city.

Fear of job cuts

In response to queries sent by *businessline*, a spokesperson for the Adani group replied, "We do not comment on our employee related matters."

There is also fear of job cuts as the group grapples with the huge debt on its balance sheet and is looking for ways to reduce and optimise costs.

(The writer is with businessline)

Aurobindo, Cipla, Viatris to make ViiV's HIV drug

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

U.N.-backed public health organisation Medicines Patent Pool has signed agreements with Aurobindo Pharma, Cipla and Viatris (via subsidiary Mylan) under which the drugmakers will manufacture generic versions of ViiV Healthcare's HIV prevention medicine cabotegravir LA.

Aurobindo and Viatris will manufacture in India, while Cipla will manufacture in India and has plans in South Africa, MPP said.

Google says Microsoft's cloud practices are anti-competitive

Reuters
BRUSSELS

Alphabet's Google Cloud has accused Microsoft of anti-competitive cloud computing practices and criticised imminent deals with several European cloud vendors, saying these do not solve broader concerns about its licensing terms.

In Google Cloud's first public comments on Microsoft and its European deals its Vice President Amit Zavery told Reuters the company has raised the issue with antitrust agencies and urged European Union antitrust regulators to take a closer look.

In response, Microsoft referred to a blogpost in May last year where its president Brad Smith said it 'has a healthy number two position when it comes to cloud services, with just over 20% market share'.

The sector has recently drawn regulatory scrutiny because of the dominance of a few players and its increasingly critical role as more companies shift their services to the cloud.

Microsoft has offered to change its cloud computing practices in a deal with a few smaller rivals which in turn will suspend their antitrust complaints, a person with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters this week.

Mr. Zavery said individual deals struck [selectively] with several smaller European cloud vendors only benefit Microsoft.

'Industry eyes ₹1.5-lakh crore transmission projects'

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The industry is expecting the government to invite bids for power transmission infrastructure projects worth ₹1.5-lakh crore in 18 months, Sterlite Power Transmission said.

In December, the government had unveiled a plan with investment opportunities of about ₹2.44 lakh crore for building a transmission system for evacuating 500 gigawatts (GW) of non-fossil based energy by 2030.

Nextracker bags order to supply solar trackers for NTPC

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Nasdaq-listed Nextracker Technologies, which provides solar tracker and software solutions to solar projects around the world, said on Thursday that it has bagged a large order from Sterling and Wilson Renewable Energy Ltd., an EPC and O&M solutions provider. The order is to deliver solar trackers to NTPC Renewable Energy Ltd.,'s Solar PV Project in Khavda RE Park, Gujarat.

Sterling and Wilson is implementing this project and will use Nextracker's optimised bifacial solar tracker for additional energy output.

Nextracker's optimised bifacial solar tracker will be used for additional energy output

"Due to improved tracker design efficiencies, there is an upward trend for the adoption of solar trackers combined with bifacial module technology in India. And we are expecting large contracts going forward due to the policy support for solar energy," said Rajeev Kashyap, MD & vice president, Nextracker India Pvt. Ltd.

"In addition to supplying solar tracker technology, components will be manufactured with locally-made steel from factories in Gujarat. The project is slated to be operational by first half of 2024," he said adding the NTPC's 1.568 GW DC solar PV project at Khavda is the single-largest solar tracker-based site outside China.

With 5GW of manufacturing capacity in India annually, the company has been associated with twenty-five projects in India.

Sport

Sindhu and Srikanth enter the quarterfinals in Spain Masters

Press Trust of India
MADRID

P.V. Sindhu and K. Srikanth moved to the singles quarterfinals of the Madrid Spain Masters badminton tournament with straight game wins here on Thursday.

Sindhu dispatched Putri Kusuma Wardani of Indonesia 21-16, 21-14 in a little over half an hour to enter her first quarterfinal in 2023,.

Srikanth pulled off a 21-15, 21-12 second round win over compatriot B. Sai Praneeth to progress.

Moving ahead: Srikanth advanced at Sai Praneeth's expense. FILE PHOTO

Other results (second roun):

Men: Magnus Johannesen bt Kiran George 21-17, 21-12; Toma Junior Popov (Fra) bt Priyanshu Rajawat 21-14, 21-15; Kanta Tsuneyama (Jpn) bt Sameer Verma 21-15, 21-14.

Doubles: Haruya Nishida & Shuntaro Mezaki (Jpn) bt M.R. Arjun & Dhruv Kapila 21-16, 22-20.

Women: Natsuki Nidaira (Jpn) bt Aakarshi Kashyap 21-13, 21-8; Carolina Marin (ESp) bt Malvika Bansod, walkover; Yeo Jia Min (Sgp) bt Ashmita Chaliha 21-15, 21-15.

Doubles: Rui Hirokami & Yuna Kato (Jpn) bt Sikki Reddy & Arathi Sara Sunil 21-12, 21-13.

Amazing Aravindh seals title in style; Sethuraman third

DELHI OPEN CHESS

Rakesh Rao
NEW DELHI

Aravindh Chithambaram came up with yet another clinical finish to end the resistance of Levan Pantsulaia for the Delhi International Open chess title here on Thursday.

In a battle lasting 38 moves, Aravindh punished his rival for his poor choice of rook-move on the 28th turn by launching a fierce attack on the black's castled king.

After a series of exchanges, Aravindh emerged with an extra knight before the Georgian gave up.

Aravindh, who aggregated 9.5 points from 10 rounds, collected ₹6 lakh and the winner's trophy from an event that offered ₹45 lakh in prize-money. Georgia's Luka Paichadze was second with nine points and gained ₹5 lakh.

Worthy champion: Aravinth receiving the reward for his winning display. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Top seed S.P. Sethuraman, whose campaign stumbled in the fifth and sixth rounds, won his fourth game in succession to top a six-way tie for the third place at 8.5 points.

A surprise Indian in the top-10 was 11-year-old Goan-lad Ethan Vaz. The talented boy, among those tied at 8.5 points, remained unbeaten on way to the sixth spot.

He won seven games and his last round victim was Grandmaster G.A. Stany.

It was indeed an incredible showing from young Ethan. Rated at 1949, Ethan performed way above this starting rank of 66 among the participants to perform at 2114-level.

In the process, he ensured a whopping 104 rating points besides ₹1 lakh as prize-money.

Aravindh was clearly the best player on view. After brushing aside four untitled rivals, the second seed defeated International Master S. Nitin and GM Kirill Stupak to stretch his winning run to six rounds. A draw with Neelash Saha followed before Aravindh returned to the winning ways by nailing the GM-trio of Marat Dzhumaev, Volodar Murzin and Pantsulaia.

This performance was worth 15 rating points for Aravindh, rated 2607.

Leading results (Indians unless stated): 10th round:

Aravindh Chithambaram (9.5) bt Levan Pantsulaia (Geo, 8); Boris Savchenko (FIDE, 8.5) drew with Aleksej Aleksandrov (FIDE, 8.5); Alexei Fedeorov (FIDE, 8) lost to Luka Paichadze (Geo, 9); Mukhiddin Madaminov (Uzb, 7.5) lost to S. P. Sethuraman (8.5); Mikhail Kobalia (FIDE, 8.5) bt Deepan Chakkravarthy (7.5).

Mikheil Mchedlishvili (Geo, 8) drew with Suresh Harsh (8); Volodar Murzin (FIDE, 8) drew with Anuj Shrivatri (8); Vaini Antonio D'Cunha (8) drew with M.R. Lalit Babu (8).

Michal Krasenkow (Pol, 8.5) bt Goutham Krishna (7.5); G.A. Stany (7.5) lost to Ethan Vaz (8.5).

It's showtime again as innovations embellish cricketing extravaganza

After three years under the shadow of the pandemic, it will be a rebirth of sorts with the return of the home-and-away format; new season gets underway with the Gujarat Titans-Chennai Super Kings match at the Narendra Modi Stadium

Holy grail: The representatives of the various franchises pose in front of the IPL Trophy. TWITTER/IPL

IPL-16

N. Sudarshan
AHMEDABAD

Things come thick and fast in Indian sport these days. In the 89 days since the turn of the year, the nation has played host to a stunning array of top-draw sporting events.

There were 15 limited-overs cricket matches against Sri Lanka, New Zealand and Australia, the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, Women's Premier League, Tata Open Maharashtra ATP 250, Hockey World Cup, Boxing World Championships, India Open badminton and Indian Open golf to name a few.

No longer seasonal

Gone are the days when sport was a pastime, a touristy affair to be enjoyed seasonally. It is now a 24/7/365 enterprise, with an ever-growing list of competitions waiting to be shoehorned into the calendar.

Yet, since 2008, about two months of the Indian summer – but for the General Election years of 2009 and 2014, and the Covid pandemic years of 2020 and 2021 – have been exclusively reserved for the Indian Premier League, arguably the world's most popular cricketing extravaganza.

Families and friends either throng stadiums or embellish their living rooms with large TV screens, as the world's best cricketers reveal their secret graces, for there is nothing finer in life than its physical enjoyment.

From Friday, it will be that time of the year again as IPL 2023 gets underway at the Narendra Modi Stadium here with the match between Gujarat Titans and Chennai Super Kings.

After three years spent under the shadow of the pandemic, it will be a rebirth of sorts with the return of the home-and-away format, allowing players to bounce off the audience's energy like showmen would in a theatre.

This season's IPL will demand that both players and fans recalibrate their minds.

If the differing conditions and varying boundary sizes are a throwback to earlier times, the move to introduce Impact Player substitution and allow naming of the playing XIs after the toss have given rise to intrigue.

The slated aim is to "add a new tactical/strategic dimension to the game" and "maintain IPL's position at the forefront of innovative cricket."

Revolution continues

This is in tune with how the IPL has evolved over the last 15 years, a revolution that has wiped out many things ingrained in cricket. But sometimes, it may bring back a few forgotten ones.

Joe Root will feature in his first-ever IPL, with the Englishman auditioning rather well with ramp shots over the cordon in Test cricket!

The seemingly done-and-dusted Kane Williamson returns, rejuvenated and hungry.

Among the other attractions are Shubman Gill, widely touted as the next Indian batting great, Harry Brook, who best represents England's transformation under Brendon McCullum, and Cameron Green, the Australian all-rounder of endless possibilities.

Maverick Jofra Archer is set to play his first IPL since 2020, a much-awaited moment.

Missing stars

The absence of Jasprit Bumrah, Rishabh Pant and Shreyas Iyer (for at least the first half) will hurt their teams and the appeal of the tournament. Bumrah's and Shreyas' back injuries, in particular, have reignited the debate on whether too much cricket is being played.

It doesn't help that India's World Test Championship final against Australia is scheduled just over a week after the IPL ends.

But those are worries for another day, for when the clock strikes 7.30 on Friday evening, it will be showtime!

T20 cricket's summer carnival

It's time to fasten the seat belts as the 16th chapter of the IPL opens in Ahmedabad on Friday. A look at the seasons gone by and the road ahead:

HOW THE TEAMS HAVE FARED

	M	Won	Lost	NR
MI	**231**	131	100	0
CSK	**209**	121	87	1
KKR	**223**	114	109	0
RCB	**227**	109	114	4
DC	**224**	103	119	2
PBKS	**218**	101	117	0
RR	**192**	96	94	2
SRH	**152**	75	77	0
GT	**16**	12	4	0
LSG	**15**	9	6	0

KEY FACTS

- The home-and-away format will return to the IPL after three years with each team playing seven home and seven away games
- A total of 70 league games will be played across 12 venues
- The ACA Stadium in Guwahati and the Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Stadium in Lucknow will make their IPL debut
- There will be 18 double-headers this season, the day games starting at 3.30 p.m. and the evening matches at 7.30 p.m.
- The final will be held on May 28

SEASON BY SEASON

	MI	CSK	KKR	SRH	RR	RCB	DC	PBKS
2008	5th	Runner-up	6th	-	**Winner**	7th	Semifinalist	Semifinalist
2009	7th	Semifinalist	8th	-	6th	Runner-up	Semifinalist	5th
2010	Runner-up	**Winner**	6th	-	7th	3rd	5th	8th
2011	3rd	**Winner**	4th	-	6th	Runner-up	10th	5th
2012	4th	Runner-up	**Winner**	-	7th	5th	3rd	6th
2013	**Winner**	Runner-up	7th	4th	3rd	5th	9th	6th
2014	4th	3rd	**Winner**	6th	5th	7th	8th	Runner-up
2015	**Winner**	Runner-up	5th	6th	4th	3rd	7th	8th
2016	5th	-	4th	**Winner**	-	Runner-up	6th	8th
2017	**Winner**	-	3rd	4th	-	8th	6th	5th
2018	5th	**Winner**	3rd	Runner-up	4th	6th	8th	7th
2019	**Winner**	Runner-up	5th	4th	7th	8th	3rd	6th
2020	**Winner**	7th	5th	3rd	8th	4th	Runner-up	6th
2021	5th	**Winner**	Runner-up	8th	7th	4th	3rd	6th
2022	10th	9th	7th	8th	Runner-up	3rd	5th	6th

Gujarat Titans won the title in its maiden appearance in 2022 while Lucknow Super Giants finished fourth

Defending champion Titans take on Super Kings in one of the league's newest and fascinating rivalries

N. Sudarshan
AHMEDABAD

Fit and fret: Hardik will look to continue his inspirational leadership while CSK will hope Dhoni's strapped knee isn't a concern. VIJAY SONEJI

If Chennai Super Kings is Indian Premier League royalty, Gujarat Titans is the talented and ambitious prince eager to burnish its credentials.

On Friday at the Narendra Modi Stadium, the four-time winner will take on the defending champion in one of the tournament's newest and fascinating rivalries.

For CSK, a confident start is of paramount importance to banish memories of last year when it finished ninth out of 10 teams.

For Titans, it will be a first brush with handling high expectations, for it is no longer the hunter but the hunted.

In-form Jadeja

A fit and firing Ravindra Jadeja is a big plus for the M.S. Dhoni-led CSK, and with the captaincy fiasco of the previous season behind him, the all-rounder will be eager to show his real worth in all three departments.

The addition of Ben Stokes gives the side a cutting edge and the Englishman, who has so far not really set the tournament on fire, will be eager to leave a mark.

But CSK will have to do without left-arm pacer Mukesh Choudhary – one of the team's better bowlers in a disappointing IPL 2022 – who has been ruled out because of a back injury.

For Titans, South African David Miller, a standout player last year, will miss the tournament opener as he is playing the ODI series against the Netherlands.

Rich talent

But Titans is a star-studded team, well serviced by Hardik Pandya's mature captaincy, Shubman Gill's brilliance and Kane Williamson's intelligence and guile.

On Thursday evening, the heavens opened up for a brief while, cutting short the teams' practice but bringing some much-needed relief from the discomforting humidity.

Friday, though, looks clear, as the IPL is set to embrace an all-new world with most of the old comforts firmly intact.

Today's match

GUJARAT TITANS vs. CHENNAI SUPER KINGS

Ahmedabad, 7.30 p.m.

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Played: 2

GT 2 | CSK 0

PREVIOUS MEETING

GT won by seven wickets, 2022

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 (SD & HD) & JIO CINEMA APP

> We are under no illusions about what lies ahead... there are challenges as far as travel is concerned and we are playing in front of a home crowd, which I will describe as an opportunity
>
> **VIKRAM SOLANKI**
> Gujarat Titans Director of Cricket

> Every individual is improving, bowlers are coming out with different deliveries. New rules are coming up and I am not sure how it's going to look. But cricket needs to change and we want to see improvement. So we are really excited and looking forward.
>
> **AJINKYA RAHANE**
> on the evolution of IPL through the last 15 years

LIKE FOR LIKE

CSK pacer Mukesh ruled out; Akash named replacement

Chennai Super Kings (CSK), on Thursday, named Akash Singh as a replacement for the injured left-arm pacer Mukesh Choudhary. Akash, also a left-arm pacer, was part of India's Under-19 World Cup team in 2020. He was previously with Rajasthan Royals and played one match in the 2021 season.

MILESTONE MOMENT

Cirstea upsets Sabalenka in WTA Miami Open quarterfinals

Romanian Sorana Cirstea reached her first WTA 1000 semifinal in a decade upsetting Aryna Sabalenka 6-4, 6-4 in the Miami Open quarterfinals on Wednesday. Carlos Alcaraz's match against Taylor Fritz and Petra Kvitova's meeting with Ekaterina Alexandrova were postponed.

ZERO TOLERANCE

Hamilton lauds Brazil for fining Piquet over racist comments

Lewis Hamilton applauded the hefty fine imposed on three-time Formula One champion Nelson Piquet for racist remarks, saying people "full of hate" should not be tolerated. Piquet was fined $945,000 last weekend for calling Hamilton "*neguinho*" ("little black") in a 2021 interview.

TENNIS ICON

Legislation offered for honouring Billie Jean King

Sports trailblazer Billie Jean King would become the first woman athlete to receive the Congressional Gold Medal under legislation, the US Tennis Association said on Wednesday. The move comes as tennis celebrates the 50th anniversary of equal prize money at the US Open.

NEVER TOO LATE

Demus gets Olympic gold after Antyukh disqualification

American runner Lashinda Demus, left, officially became an Olympic champion at the age of 40. Demus was reallocated the 2012 London Games 400m hurdles gold by the IOC because of the disqualification of Natalya Antyukh in the fallout from the Russian doping scandal.

INBRIEF

Spurs MD Paratici handed worldwide FIFA ban

Tottenham managing director of football Fabio Paratici has been given a worldwide ban by FIFA. Paratici was handed a 30-month ban from Italian football in January after his former club Juventus was found guilty of false accounting. The 50-year-old Italian was sporting director and MD at Juventus before joining Tottenham in June 2021. His initial ban, against which Paratici and Juventus have appealed, only applied to his homeland.

First win for Humpy; Harika loses in FIDE Women's GP

K. Humpy's wait for her first victory ended when she outplayed Georgia's Nana Dzagnidze in 59 moves in the fifth round of the FIDE Women's Grand Prix chess tournament here on Thursday. On a day when China's Zhu Jiner emerged as the sole leader at 3.5 points after upstaging Kateryna Lagno, D. Harika became Bibisara Assaubayeva's third victim of the week. R. Vaishali opened her account with a draw against Georgian Nino Batsiashvili.

The results (fifth round): Nana Dzagnidze (Geo, 1.5) lost to K. Humpy (2.5); R. Vaishali (0.5) drew with Nino Batsiashvili (Geo, 1); Bibisara Assaubayeva (Kaz, 3) bt D. Harika (1.5); Zhu Jiner (Chn, 3.5) bt Kateryna Lagno (FIDE, 2); Aleksandra Goryachkina (FIDE, 2) and Polina Shuvalova (FIDE, 2.5) bye.

Rakesh Rao

LIVE TELECAST

New Zealand vs Sri Lanka: 3rd ODI, Prime Video, 6.30 a.m.
Bangladesh vs Ireland: 3rd T20I, FanCode, 1.30 p.m.
South Africa vs Netherlands: 1st ODI, FanCode, 4.30 p.m.
IPL: Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 7.30 p.m.
Bundesliga: Sony Sports Ten 2 (SD & HD) & LIV, 12 a.m. (Saturday)
LaLiga: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 12.30 a.m. (Saturday)

Van Meijel in the lead ahead of final round

The Dutchman cards a blemish-free five-under 67 to lie two strokes in front of Girrbach and Fitzpatrick

Ashwin Achal
BENGALURU

Lars Van Meijel shot an error-free five-under 67 third round to top the leaderboard of The Challenge 2023 presented by KGA here on Thursday. Netherlands' Van Meijel (17-under 199) enters the final round on Friday with a two shot lead over nearest rivals Joel Girrbach and Alex Fitzpatrick.

Great going: It was van Meijel's day out on Thursday. GETTY IMAGES

Van Meijel got off to a great start with four birdies on the front-nine. "It was windier than the other days. It was in a slightly different direction as well so I had to adjust a little bit," Van Meijel, who has one win on the Challenge Tour, said.

Kartik Sharma finished the day as the best Indian performer. Kartik made a bogey-free 70 to take tied-sixth spot.

The southpaw – tied with France's Ugo Coussaud – is four shots behind the leader. Kartik had a steady round, making two birdies and pars on the rest of the holes.

Among other Indians, Aman Raj (12-under 204) sat tied eighth. Udayan Mane (11-under 205) was tied 12th, while Yuvraj Sandhu and Veer Ahlawat (both 10-under 206) sat in tied 19th.

The scores (top six): 199: Lars Van Meijel (Ned) (66, 66, 67); **201:** Joel Girrbach (Sui) (69, 64, 68), Alex Fitzpatrick (Eng) (65, 65, 71); **202:** Michael Hirmer (Ger) (64, 71, 67), Frederic Lacroix (Fra) (67, 66, 69); **203:** Ugo Coussaud (Fra) (68, 67, 68), Kartik Sharma (66, 67, 70).

TENNIS SNAPSHOTS

Iranian boys blank India in Asia-Oceania under-14 tennis

KUCHING (MALAYSIA): Iran beat India 2-0 in a play-off match for the lower placings in the Asia-Oceania World junior under-14 boys tennis tournament here on Thursday.

In the placing play-off for the 13-16 spots, India will play Kyrgyzstan.

Korea, Japan, Hong Kong and Pakistan made the semifinals.

The results: Play-off 9-16: Iran bt India 2-0 (Kiyarash Sadeghizeidi bt Rudra Batham 6-3, 6-4; Sam Attaran bt Shivtej Shirfule 5-7, 6-2, 6-3).

Double delight for Balachandar Subramanian

INDORE: Fifth seed Balachandar Subramanian beat second seed Shekar Veeraswamy 7-5, 1-6, [10-4] in the final of the National wheelchair tennis championship at the Indore Tennis Club on Thursday.

Subramanian also partnered Veeraswamy to beat top seeds Mariappan Durai and Karthik Karunakaran in the doubles final.

The results (finals):

Singles: Balachandar Subramanian bt Shekar Veeraswamy 7-5, 1-6, [10-4].

Doubles: Balachandar Subramanian & Shekar Veeraswamy bt Mariappan Durai & Karthik Karunakaran 6-1, 4-1 (retd).

Karan stuns seventh seed Sidharth, enters last eight

WTT MYSURU OPEN

Sports Bureau
MYSURU

MYSURU: Unseeded Karan Singh, playing a free-stroking game on both the flanks, staved off the challenge put up by seventh seeded Sidharth Rawat and scored an upset win in three absorbing sets 7-6(5), 3-6, 6-4 and entered the quarterfinals in the men's singles event on the third day of the M25 WTT Mysuru Open at the MTC courts here on Thursday.

Second seeded Oliver Crawford (USA), third seed Vladyslav Orlov (Ukr), fourth seed Sasikumar Mukund, sailed into the quarterfinals with well-earned wins over their rivals.

Local lad S.D. Prajwal Dev entered the quarterfinals with a 6-3, 7-6(6) win over qualifier P. Vishnuvardhan. Giant killer George Loffhagen from Britain, and Ellis Blake (Aus) also entered the quarterfinals.

The results: Men: (Pre-quarterfinals): Florent Bax (Fra) bt Nitin Kumar Sinha 6-1, 7-5; Oliver Crawford (USA) bt Ishaque Eqbal 6-3, 6-3; Karan Singh bt Sidharth Rawat 7-6(5), 3-6, 6-4; Blake Ellis (Aus) bt Mitsuki Wei Kang Leong (Mas) 6-2, 6-3, Vladyslav Orlov (Ukr) bt Rishab Agarwal 6-1, 5-7, 6-4; S.D. Prajwal Dev bt P.Vishnuvardhan 6-3, 7-6(6), George Loffagen (Gbr) bt Woobin Shin (Kor) 6-0, 6-1; Sasikumar Mukund bt Faisal Qumar 6-1, 6-2.

Overnight Interrupted match: (First round) (Overnight 2-1) Sasikumar Mukund bt Boris Butulija (Srb) 6-3, 3-6, 6-3.

Doubles: (Quarterfinals): Parikshit Somani & Manish Sureshkumar bt Nicholas Bybel & Dali Blanch & Nicholas Bybel 6-3, 6-7 (5), (12-10); Ritvik Choudary & Niki Kaliyanda Poonacha bt Florent Bax & Nitin Kumar Sinha 6-3, 7-6 (3); Blake Ellis/Vladyslav Orlov bt Ishaque Eqbal & Karan Singh 6-1, 7-5.

Karnataka Badminton Association summer camp from April 3

Sports Bureau
BENGALURU

The Karnataka Badminton Association will conduct its badminton summer camp in association with Anup Sridhar Badminton Academy from April 3 to May 31.

For details, call 7353355566.

AGORC posts win

AGORC defeated Gajanana FC 3-1 in the BDFA 'A' division football league at here.

The results: AGORC FC 3 (R. Bhuvan 44, N. Yogith 76, M. Lokesh 90) bt Gajanana FC 1 (Shivakumar 78).

MRF Supercross showdown on Sunday

MOTORSPORTS

Rayan Rozario
COIMBATORE

The FMSCI-MRF MOGRIP National Supercross championship will be held at a makeshift venue near the CODISSIA grounds here on Sunday.

The season's opener has attracted some of the top supercross riders from across the country.

"Along with them, we are confident of touching 120-plus entries as it is the first round, and the riders all love to race in this part of the region," said Shyam Kothari of God Speed Racing, the man behind the show.

The professionals are sure to steal the show, but all eyes will be on the juniors (8-12yrs) as well.

"We started it a couple of years ago. Initially, it was difficult to even form this class as it attracted only very few entries. But now it has gone up to 15 which is an encouraging sign as they are the stars of the future," he said.

The other class (12-16yrs) is expected to touch a similar figure but the overall participation is likely to be high.

The track is not going to be tight and technical this year. "Since it is the first round we have designed a very fast track but it's going to be safe," said Kothari.

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